

# Blavatsky, Besant and Co.

*(The Story of A Great Anti-Christian Fraud)*

BY T. M. FRANCIS

*With a Preface by*

HERBERT THURSTON, S. J.



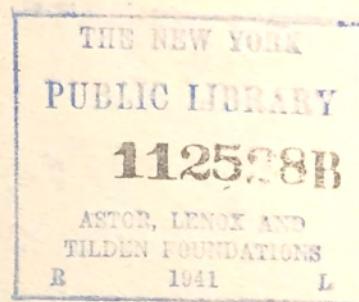
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MADAME H. P. BLAVATSKY  
*Founder of the Theosophical Society*

# Introduction

Theosophy claims to be the final truth given to mankind, and to have been taught in sundry times and divers places adown the ages by Supermen called Mahatmas (Great Souls), who, having completed their evolution, undertake to guide the evolution of the race. These Great Souls are said to have founded all the different religions that exist or have existed, suitable to the needs and degree of civilization attained by mankind through past ages and in the present time.

Theosophy, it is claimed, was perfectly revealed to Madame H. P. Blavatsky, a Russian lady, by Mahatmas who, it is alleged, live in Tibet.

On their instruction, she founded the Theosophical Society in 1875, wrote voluminously in explanation of their teaching, and produced extraordinary "Phenomena" in proof of that teaching.

In India, Theosophists use for the most part Sanskrit and Buddhist terminology.

Aware that a spring cannot be found purer than at its source, we shall trace from its beginnings the turgid stream of Modern Theosophy.

For convenience we shall follow the fortunes of the founder, Mme. Blavatsky: examine her works and deeds; dip into the affairs of the Society after her death; comment on a few of the many extraordinary Theosophical tenets that are destined, we are told, to replace the Christian religion; and conclude with a chapter on Theosophy versus Christianity. By Theosophists, Mme. Blavatsky is conveniently designated "Madame," "H.P.B.," or "The Old Lady."

A popular presentation of Theosophy is given on page 109 in the Appendix.

MOST STRANGE, BUT YET MOST TRULY WILL I SPEAK.  
—*Measure for Measure*, Act. V.

My religion is Truth, for there is no religion higher than  
Truth. —Mme. Blavatsky.

If there be no Mahatmas the Theosophical Society is an  
absurdity. —Mrs. Besant.

## Preface

When the Roman poet spoke of Hypermenestra as a *splendide mendax* he commended the lie by which she saved her husband's life, though pledged to murder him. Madame Blavatsky might also be described as *splendide mendax*, but she was "a magnificent liar" in quite another sense. It was her pose of utter frankness, her readiness in subterfuge, her ingenuousness in avowing beforehand, and even exaggerating, all those shortcomings which people could not fail to find out for themselves, which persuaded those who made her acquaintance that she was a woman with no nonsense about her, an open character, transparent as the day. Undoubtedly she was capable of making herself very attractive. She had a certain Falstaffian audacity and nimbleness of wit which captivated all but the very strait-laced. She was *bon diable* among her intimates, and with them made no pretences. She lied and railed and jested, just as she smoked, and, on occasion, gormandised, without restraint, carrying it off by sheer force of personality. But she was a woman without moral principle, and it is incredible that any higher revelation of spiritual things should have come into the world through such a channel.

I am not saying, of course, that Theosophy stands pledged to any teaching which is in open conflict with public morality. No one can dispute that there are excellent principles inculcated upon and often practised by Theosophists, but these things are the common heritage of all religious teachings since Christianity came into the world. The same may be said of Mohammedanism, or of Christian Science, or for that matter of the Neo-Platonism which was built up upon a philosophy of almost purely pagan origin. On the other hand no one can claim to decide what Theosophy does or

does not precisely teach. Mrs. Annie Besant, who had as good a right to speak as anybody, openly declared: "I do not consider that the Theosophical Society has any moral code binding on its members", and again "our religious liberty of opinion—irreligious license say the dogmatists—is secure". But this language filled the Point Loma Theosophists with horror and indignation, and in any case it must never be lost sight of that there are at least three or four independent organizations professing to be representative of the true spirit of Madame Blavatsky, all of which have devoted much of their energies to anathematizing one another with more or less vehemence. Throughout the whole of its course the career of the Theosophical Society has been marked by a series of scandals and schisms, affecting not merely the rank and file, but the most prominent representatives of the movement. Some of these domestic entanglements have been pretty fully described in the pages which follow, but a complete chronicle could hardly be attempted in a work ten times the size of the present.

Regard being had to the career of Madame Blavatsky herself, as the author has here recounted it from evidence which cannot be challenged, Theosophy stands unequivocally condemned by one of her own utterances. "There was never," we read in *Isis Unveiled* (vol. 11, Ch. 7, p. 333), "a great religious reform that was not pure at the beginning". Very true; and from this it follows that an organization, begotten by one who was morally, and socially an outcast, and further indebted for its initial successes to systematic deception and trickery, can make no claim to teach mankind a higher way of life, or help in any way to a clearer revelation of the divine economy of the universe. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

HERBERT THURSTON, S. J.

July 1, 1939  
London, England.

# Who's Who

(In Blavatsky, Besant and Co.)

**BLAVATSKY, MME. H. P.**—Russian. Founder of the T.S., 1875, New York. Produced “phenomena” by alleged Mahatmic agency. On investigation by the Society for Psychical Research, the phenomena was declared fraudulent and Madame an impostor. She died in London, 1891, at the age of 60.

**BESANT, MRS. ANNIE**—Joined the T.S., 1888. Elected president of the T.S., 1907. Died at Adyar, 1933, aged 86.

**COULOMB, MON. AND MME. E.**—Handyman and housekeeper at the T.S., Adyar. In 1884 confessed to have been confederates of Mme. Blavatsky in producing spurious phenomena.

**DAMODAR**—Hindu secretary to Mme. Blavatsky. Cooperated in frauds and forgeries.

**HARTMANN, DR. F.**—German-American Theosophist. On Board of Control at Adyar. Wrote in favor of phenomena.

**HODGSON, R.**—Graduate of St. John’s College, Cambridge. Was sent to Madras to investigate alleged phenomena; e.g., Mahatma letters, etc. His report was accepted by the Society for Psychical Research and Mme. Blavatsky was declared a charlatan.

**HUME, A. O.**—Indian civil servant of high rank. Joined the T.S. For sometime believed in and wrote in favor of phenomena.

**JUDGE, W. Q.**—American lawyer. Vice-president of the T.S. Accused of forging Mahatma letters to gain advancement in the T.S. Left the T.S. and founded independent T.S. in New York. Died in 1896.

**KRISHNAMURTI, J.**—Brahman youth whom Mrs. Besant put in training at Adyar, 1911, as the vehicle of the future World Teacher and the new Messiah. Many lawsuits fought on his account.

**LEADBEATER, C. W.**—Ex-Anglican curate. Joined Mme. Blavatsky 1884, as Theosophist tutor to Krishna. Occulist and clairvoyant with an evil reputation.

OLCOTT, COL. H. S.—American engineer, lawyer, and journalist. Co-founder of the T.S. with Mme. Blavatsky. President of the T.S. until his death at Adyar, 1906.

SINNETT, A. P.—Sometime editor of the *Pioneer* (Indian). In 1880 “privileged” to communicate with Mahatma K. H. through Mme. Blavatsky. Wrote result in *The Occult World* and *Esoteric Buddhism*.

SOLOVYOFF, V. S.—Russian. Man of letters. Attracted to Theosophy by Mme. Blavatsky. Exposed her phenomena in Europe in *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, chiefly valuable for a collection of Madame's *undisputed* letters.

## CHAPTER I

The biographical sketch of Mme. H. P. Blavatsky, in which the amazing career of this versatile Russian adventuress, as traveler, spiritualist medium, bigamist is set forth from her own undisputed letters, and the testimony of her cousin Count S. J. Witte, sometime Russian Ambassador to Washington. Her virginity myth is likewise exposed in this chapter.

Helen Petrovna Blavatsky (née Hahn) was born in the Russian Ukraine, July, 1831, and died in London, May 8, 1891. "It is generally known among her followers," writes Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, "that our great founder when she left the body in which we knew her, entered another which had just been abandoned by its original tenant."<sup>1</sup>

Her father was an army captain, and her mother an authoress of some importance in Russia. But to create an impression and advance her career, Mme. Blavatsky had a coronet printed on her visiting cards.

She acquired American naturalization before sailing for India.

When not yet seventeen, piqued at the remark that even General Blavatsky would not marry such a headstrong girl, she "made up to him," married him within three months and left him within three more. She declared that the General was nearer seventy than sixty at the time, but he did not die till 1892, a year later than herself. Since her cousin states he was married in the forties, H.P.B.'s statement must be accounted for as one of her customary exaggerations.

There is no detailed account of her wanderings for some twenty-five years. It was ten years after her marriage before she returned to her home. Her own accounts of her wanderings, given on occasion to Sinnett and others, are contradictory and, in general, fictitious.

But fortunately certain important *lacunae* can be filled in from the *Memoirs* of her cousin, Count S. Y. Witte. Sinnett, her biographer, says that H.P.B. kept no diary, and that at the distant date (1886) when he wrote *Incidents*<sup>2</sup> from her notes and narration, "she can give no very connected story of those complicated wanderings." In Letter LXI she wrote: "Between H.P.B. from 1875 and H.P.B. 1831 . . . is a veil drawn."<sup>3</sup>

In 1858 she was in Paris, where she met the American medium Dongas Home, from whom she took lessons in Spiritualism. "He converted me to Spiritualism," she said.<sup>4</sup>

We next hear of Madame in New York. At that time spiritualism was booming in the States, mediums were in demand and big money was being made. Madame was in low water, forty-three years of age, with a stormy life behind her, as we shall see, and America "the only refuge left in the world." The star-turn among mediums was that of the Eddy brothers of Vermont. Crowds flock to their homestead. Thither in October, 1874, came a reporter for the New York *Graphic*, a colonel by government courtesy, a lawyer by profession who dabbled in spiritualism as a paying hobby, by name Henry Steel Olcott. Thither also came Madame H. P. Blavatsky, writer and traveler, deeply versed and interested in Spiritualism and Occultism of every complexion. They met, never to part. Charmed by Madame's versatility, stories of travel, and alleged occult knowledge, Olcott wrote her up as only an American journalist could. Later a Mahatmic letter (No. xliv) from Master M. to Sinnett was precipitated to strengthen the alliance of Colonel and "Countess," which ran: "Casting about, we found in America the man to stand as leader. We sent her [H.P.B.] to America and brought them together."

Madame longed to let her countrymen know all that was going on at the Vermont farm and elsewhere in the States, and incidentally to augment her slender and casual income. It happened that

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Spiritualist writer, Andrew Jackson Davis, whom she met, knew the editor of the *Leipzig Psychische Studien*, a Russian, A. K. Aksakoff, who doubtless would welcome literary contributions from a country woman on American Spiritualistic phenomena.<sup>5</sup> Davis wrote to Aksakoff, telling him of his unconventional country woman. Madame did not wait for a reply, but wrote directly to Aksakoff on October 28, 1874:

Excuse the liberty I take in addressing so unceremoniously one to whom I am entirely unknown. The facts are these: I have been living in America for about a year and a half, and have no intention of leaving. . . . An attempt should be made to explain at home what is now going on in America, in England and in France. . . .

Before Aksakoff could answer, she wrote on November 14th because something had happened to make her "bitterly repent" having written the first letter. It was this: Aksakoff had replied to Davis's query concerning Madame, and not knowing French, Davis had handed the letter to Madame to translate.

J'ai entendu parler de Madame Blavatsky par un de ses parents, qui la dit un médium assez fort. Malheureusement, ses communications ressentent de son moral, qui n'a pas été des plus sévères.<sup>6</sup>

(I have heard Madame spoken of by one of her relations, who said she was rather a powerful medium. Unfortunately, her communications bear marks of her morality, which has not been of the severest kind.)  
Madame did but affirm the truth of Aksakoff's revelation:

Whoever it was told you about me, they told you the truth in essence, if not in detail. . . . This past, like the brand of the curse on Cain, has pursued me all my life, and pursues me even here in America, where I came to be far from it and from the people who knew me in my youth. . . . I was a "materialist" till I was nearly thirty, and believed and did not believe in spiritism. As I did not believe in God I could not believe in a future life. Morality

and good deeds I regarded as a social garment, for the sake of propriety. . . . I ran amuck against society and the established proprieties. . . .

To Aksakoff's assurance of goodwill she answered:

I do not know how to thank you for your infinite goodness. Though you have the right, like any honorable man, to despise me for my sad reputation in the past, you are so condescending and magnanimous as to write to me. . . . When I had read your letter I saw how I had been mistaken in you, and that you were ready to stretch out a helping hand, even to a sinner like myself.<sup>7</sup>

She then enters into a long account of Olcott's writings, the phenomena of spiritualism and her own place therein. To this we shall return.

It would be no part of our business to pry into the private life of Madame Blavatsky, were it not that late in life she publicly declared, despite her marriages, that she had always remained a virgin and that in consequence of her virginity, she was privileged to "unveil Isis" and reveal the secret doctrine of a new and universal religion. While the virtues or vices of the ordinary worshiper are not judged to be a conclusive argument for or against his religion it is generally held that founders and reformers are to be judged by a stricter standard, on the principle that bad trees do not bear good fruit. Unlike Augustine of Hippo, who wrote his *Confessions* to show forth the grace of God in his conversion from a carnally sinful life, Mme. Blavatsky, after founding the Theosophical Society, contracted a bigamous marriage and published a lying account of her having always remained a virgin. It will be well, therefore, to set down what is known *for certain* of Madame Blavatsky's morals and marriages, and thus prepare the reader for her Virginity Myth (in the offspring) and, incidentally, show what sort of a character was the founder of Modern Theosophy.

In a twelve-page letter written to her some-time intimate friend and accomplice, Madame E. Coulomb, Madame Blavatsky gave

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startling details of her life from 1857 to 1875, stating, *inter alia*, how she had lived for years with a man named Metrovitch, passed as his wife and reared their son.<sup>8</sup> Mme. Blavatsky declared the letter a forgery. Its contents are, however, corroborated by her own cousin.

In his *Memoirs* (1849-1915), edited by A. Yarmolinsky, 1921, the distinguished Russian diplomat and Ambassador to the U.S.A., Serge Julevich Witte, who was created Count of the Russian Empire by the Czar in 1905, tells an interesting story about his cousin, H. P. Blavatsky, which throws a lurid light on the private life of the founder of Modern Theosophy. The Count writes:

One of my aunts, who married Colonel Hahn, achieved some fame as a writer. Her eldest daughter was the celebrated Theosophist known under the name of Mme. Blavatsky. The personality and career of my cousin Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, deserves to be treated at some length.

Being many years her junior, he gives the account current in his family till he met her himself: how at an early age she married Blavatsky but soon abandoned him; how, disgusted at her conduct, her grandfather sent her to her father, stationed near St. Petersburg; how, en route, she struck up an acquaintance with an English Captain at Poti, eluded her escort and "stowed away in an English ship. She reached Constantinople, where she joined a circus as an equestrienne." Readers of *Incidents* will recall how, at the age of fifteen, Helen Petrovna used to ride Cossack horses bareback and astride as she did at ten years of age. In Constantinople, Metrovich, "one of the most celebrated opera bassos of the time, fell in love with her," and together they toured the European capitals. Metrovich wrote to her grandfather, announcing their marriage. Some years later "a certain Englishman from London" informed the grandparents by letter from America that he had been married to Mme. Blavatsky, who had gone with him on a business trip to the United States." H.P.B. is next heard of in Europe as "the right hand of the celebrated medium of the sixties, Hume" [sic Home].

Having promised amendment, Madame got her grandfather's permission to return to Tiflis, where Count Witte saw her for the first time. He at once noticed her "enormous azure colored eyes. . . . Never in my life have I seen anything like that pair of eyes. Every evening Tiflis society folk, the *jeunesse dorée*, would gather in our house around Helena Petrovna, and séances would last the whole evening and often times the whole night," the proceedings being kept secret from the elders of the family.

Madame was reconciled to her husband and even established a home in Tiflis, but not for long, for "one fine morning she was accosted in the street by Metrovich," who now "declining artistically" was forced to accept an engagement at Tiflis. He asserted his conjugal rights, and "as a result of the scandal, Madame Blavatsky vanished from Tiflis and the basso with her."

She is next reported from Odessa, where the Count's family had gone to live. By this time Madame and her basso must have been in low water.

It was then that my versatile cousin opened in succession an ink factory, a retail shop, and a store of artificial flowers. In those days she often came to see my mother, and I visited her store several times.

Her commercial ventures proved dismal failures. It was then "kicked that Metrovich, a "toothless lion," accepted an engagement to sing the s at the Italian opera at Cairo, and "the couple set out for Egypt. . . ."

Off the African coast their ship was wrecked. . . . Metrovich [sic] saved his mistress, but was drowned himself. Mme. Blavatsky entered Cairo in a wet skirt, without a penny to her name.

The Count ends the story of his unconventional cousin thus: "I cannot help feeling that there was something demoniac in that extraordinary woman." *Memoirs*, pp. 4-10.

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From other sources we learn that Madame opened the *Société Spirite* in Cairo, where she first met Miss Emma Cutting, a Levantine of English extraction, who later married a Frenchman, Coulomb, and who with her husband joined Madame Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society in Bombay.

The Count's story, known to all their relatives in Russia, makes unmitigated falsehood and fiction of Madame's romantic account of her meeting in Hyde Park, at the age of twenty, a turbaned Asiatic, who later commanded her telepathically to come to the Forbidden Land to sit at his feet and imbibe occult wisdom.

Forced to give some details of her connection with Metrovich, Madame told Sinnett that he was indeed a faithful friend ever since she had stumbled over his apparently dead body in Constantinople in 1850, he having been stabbed by a Maltese ruffian "who was paid by the Jesuits." Exiled from Rome—he had insulted the Pope—he came to Tiflis, where her aunt, anxious about Madame's absence, sent him to Cairo to try to bring her home. Warned by a Mahatma, "then bodily in Egypt," she again saved Metrovich from a trap to kill him, laid by Maltese "instructed by Roman Catholic monks," and hid him in her house. Tired of concealment, he went to Alexandria. Madame followed, but too late. She found him in a small hotel, sick with typhoid *with a monk near him*, whom she promptly "kicked out." She suspected Metrovich had been poisoned. Such is the story of the Virgin to whom Isis imparted ancient Truth.<sup>9</sup>

Her sister, Madame Jelihovsky, was the first to tell Solovyoff, *vive voce* and by letters, of Madame's past, and to warn him to have nothing to do with her phenomena.

Despite the fact that General Blavatsky was still alive and not divorced, H.P.B. called herself a "widow," received the amorous advances of a young Armenian merchant, reputed to be rich, and married him on April 3, 1875, in Philadelphia. She gave her age as thirty-six, whereas she was forty-three. She told Olcott that she

had been informed occultly that their lives were magically intertwined. Soon it happened that the new "husband" was not only ~~not~~ wealthy, but was on the brink of bankruptcy. So Madame left him, and on May 25, 1878, Betanelly divorced her on account of desertion. She "explained" this marriage to Solovyoff years later, by saying that the black wizard, her enemy, had taken possession of her body.

He talked with my tongue, and I knew nothing about it. I was almost as old and ugly as as I am now, but you see there are different kinds of ugliness in the world, so a handsome Armenian fell in love with me. He suddenly appeared in my house, and began to treat me as a husband would treat a wife. I ordered him off, but he does not go, declares I am his wife and that he has just been legally married to me, married before witnesses. I turn to Olcott; imagine my horror when he confirms it. He was a witness at the wedding and signed the Register: So you can imagine how much money it cost me to get rid of this Armenian.<sup>10</sup>

The account of this marriage given by Olcott is not reliable. The late Dr. J. N. Farquhar of Manchester University asked an American friend to search the public records in Philadelphia and copy the details of Madame's third bigamous marriage.<sup>11</sup>

#### THE VIRGIN MYTH

The Paris Theosophists had heard in 1885 that Madame had then been chosen out of countless millions by the Masters of Wisdom to reveal occult knowledge which would replace the effete religions of the time; that she had ascended high on the ladder of perfection and was therefore privileged to unveil Isis. They believed, but were bewildered. Was not Madame a *widow*? Would Madame explain?

At Wurzburg, in Bavaria, she "explained" that though married to General Blavatsky (her bigamies were not yet known), though malicious stories were told about her by her enemies, she had al-

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ways remained a spotless virgin. M. K. Neffe, the compiler of *Personal Memoirs of H. P. Blavatsky* (1937), begins chapter XXII:

S. V. Solovyoff: This is how it came; she had wished to save the honour of a friend, and had adopted the child of this friend as her own. She never parted from him; she educated him herself and called him her son in the face of the world. Now he is dead.

The impression sought to be conveyed—and since Solovyoff's book is long out of print and "scarce"—the impression that will be conveyed, is that he believed Madame to be speaking the truth, whereas his introductory sentence reads:

With an art which Sarah Bernhardt might envy, she confessed the secret of her life. . . .

And immediately after the sentence quoted by the Adyar archivist Solovyoff continues:

I cannot say I believed her, but her acting was so good that I was not at the time in a position to guarantee the entire falsehood of the story.<sup>12</sup>

Mme. Jelihosky, H.P.B.'s sister, anxious that Solovyoff should not expose Madame, told him that "she had one folly: that idea of 'virginity' has stirred up all this mud."

From Wurzburg, on November 3, 1885, Madame Blavatsky, then in her fifty-fourth year, weighed down with infirmities and with some 240 pounds of unhealthy flesh, sent to Sinnett, her biographer and credulous friend, a certificate from one Dr. Leon Oppenheim to prove her virginity. But no one who has read Madame's undisputed letters to Aksakoff and Solovyoff and the statement of Baroness Meyendorff, recorded by C. E. Bechhofer Roberts, can seriously believe that Madame H. P. Blavatsky retained the essential physical qualifications for unveiling Isis, on which are based her Mahatmic revelations.

## WHOSE CHILD?

The child? I better be hanged than mention it. . . . I've done too much towards proving and swearing it was mine and have overdone the thing. The doctor's certificate will go for nothing! There is Baron Meyendorff and all Russian aristocracy that would rise up against me, if in the course of contradictions the Baron's name should be mentioned.<sup>13</sup>

But Madame had to satisfy Sinnett and others about Metrovich <sup>con</sup> and the child, although her story was not to appear in *Incidents*, <sup>is I</sup> and this is what she wrote:

I knew the man in 1850, stumbled upon his apparently dead body. . . . Next found him in Florence singing opera with his wife. Next found him again in Tiflis in 1861. Again with his wife. My relations and the Witte's knew him. Then when I took the poor child to Bologna, I met him again in Italy. He did all he could for me, more than a brother. Then the child dies and as it had no papers or documents, he buried it, the aristocratic Baron's child, *under his, Metrovich's name* . . . in a small town in southern Russia in 1867.<sup>14</sup>

But fact is stranger than fiction. The "aristocratic Baron" was Baron Nicholas Meyendorff, a friend of Home's (the American medium) and an ardent spiritualist. To him Home refers when he writes of his meeting H.P.B. in Paris (1858):

A young gentleman who has ever since been a brother to me. He did not follow my advice. He was at the time her lover.

Mr. Roberts takes up the tale:

His sister-in-law, Baroness Meyendorff, has provided me with certain information about his connection with H.P.B. According to the Baroness, he fell under H.P.B.'s influence after her return to Russia in 1858, and began a liaison with her. She bore him a son, whom she assured the Baron was his. He and his brother doubted this assurance—presumably suspecting Metrovich's paternity—but they undertook to provide for the child, who was a hunch-

back. (One recognizes here the origin of the hunchback "invisible playmate" of later accounts of her childhood.) H.P.B. took the child to Italy, where he died. Photographs of the mother and child survived in the Meyendorff's home in Esthonia, until this was recently destroyed by the Bolsheviks.<sup>15</sup>

Having got an assurance from Aksakoff that he would be silent concerning her past, she tells him, with a view to translation, what is happening:

Generally speaking, I play a great part in Olcott's letters, as all the seven spirits which appeared to me at the Farm in Vermont formed a grand triumph for the cause of Spiritualism.

On one occasion the spirits fetched from her father's grave and corpse his buckle and medals. A spirit spoke to her thus:

I bring to you, Helen Blavatsky, the badge of honour, received by your father for the war of 1812. We took this medal through *the influence of your uncle*, who appeared to you this night, *from your father's grave at Stavropol*, and bring it to you as a remembrance of us in whom you believe and have faith.

Of this Mme. Blavatsky says:

I know this medal, I have seen it on my father, and I know that together with his other decorations it was buried with him. It is drawn in the *Graphic* and I have got it.<sup>16</sup>

These phenomena drew curious and credulous crowds to the séances: the mysterious Russian "Countess" was much in the news and before the public eye; her purse was replenished; life was worth living if only no one knew about her past.

After the "Katie King exposure" Madame could get no hearing for that medium in the spiritualistic Press. She compared herself with Olcott "sitting on heaps of *People from the Other World* [his unsaleable book] like Marius on the ruins of Carthage, and thinking bitter things."

Truly, things looked desperate for both the "Countess" and the Colonel. But they had courage. They started the *Miracle Club*, but no one would pay for their "miracles." Thus in July, 1875, Madame records how she is living from hand to mouth: "Here you see my trouble, tomorrow there will be nothing to eat. *Something quite out of the way must be invented.*" (Italics ours.) She tried Chicago and Boston, but no "business" resulted.

<sup>1</sup>*The Masters and the Path*, p.51 (1925).

<sup>2</sup>*Incidents In The Life of Madame H. P. Blavatsky*.

<sup>3</sup>*Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*.

<sup>4</sup>N. Y. *Graphic* (Nov. 13, 1874).

<sup>5</sup>NOTE: Madame's letters to this distinguished Russian litterateur ran from October, 1874, to November, 1877, and there are a few from 1879.

Letters written by Mme. Blavatsky to V. S. Solovyoff, the author of *Modern Priestess of Isis*, ran from May, 1884, to the spring of 1886. Of these letters Professor Sidgwick writes: "The authenticity of these letters has in no case been impugned, and in the case of *Confession* (chap. XXII in *M.P.I.*) has been explicitly admitted by Mme. Jelihovsky, Mme. Blavatsky's sister." The learned professor ends a prefatory note to *A Modern Priestess of Isis* with the remark: "It is not likely that any book will be written throwing more light on its (the Theosophical Society) origin than *A Modern Priestess of Isis*." We have not heard of any such book.

<sup>6</sup>*A Modern Priestess of Isis (M.P.I.)* p.210 (1894).

<sup>7</sup>NOTE: Most Theosophical writers pass over this passage in silence, but Mr. G. Butt tries a little whitewash, which merely shows up more clearly the old blotches of H.P.B.'s character. ". . . While the question of personal purity is of paramount importance in a religious teacher, it must not be forgotten that rightly or wrongly, public opinion on these questions has changed enormously in the last decades. . . . Large numbers of people today would probably sympathize with Mme. Blavatsky rather than condemn her for daring to "run amuck against Society and the established proprieties."—*Madame Blavatsky* 1925, chap. III.

<sup>8</sup>*M.P.I.*, p.179.

<sup>9</sup>*The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, London 1925, edited by T. A. Baker (Nos. 60 and 70).

<sup>10</sup>*M.P.I.*, p. 165.

<sup>11</sup>See *Modern Religious Movements in India*, pp.221-2 (1918).

<sup>12</sup>*M.P.I.*, pp.140-1.

<sup>13</sup>*Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*, pp.151-4.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.143-6.

<sup>15</sup>*The Mysterious Madame*”, pp.33-4 (1931).

<sup>16</sup>*M.P.I.*, pp.232-4.

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## CHAPTER II

How Mme. B. abandoned spiritualism and founded the Theosophical Society; how Home, the celebrated medium, exposed her trickery; how she wrote *Isis Unveiled* inspired by "The Mahatmas", and what Professor Max Müller and other oriental scholars thought of her "sources."

### THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Either she [H.P.B.] is a messenger from the Mahatmas or else she is a fraud. In either case, the Theosophical Society would have had no existence without her.

—Mrs. Besant: *Lucifer*, 15th Dec. 1890.

Madame informs her Russian correspondent on September 20, 1875:

Olcott is now organizing the Theosophical Society in New York. It will be composed of learned occultists and cabballists, of *philosophes Hermetiques* of the nineteenth century, and of passionate antiquaries and Egyptologists generally.

We want to make an experimental comparison between Spiritualism and the magic of the ancients by following literally the instructions of the old Cabbalas, both Jewish and Egyptian.<sup>1</sup>

As yet the Society and its founders knew nothing of Mahatmas, nor was it indoctrinated with Hinduism and Buddhism. The Theosophical Twins, as Madame began to call Olcott and herself, knew that after the surfeit of Spiritism, the American credulity-market could not vend any more "miracles."

### HOME TAKES A HAND

Home, who never liked Madame since their Paris days, now that she had "deserted the cause," resolved to get his own back.

Olcott, in his *People of The Other World*, had published a drawing of the medal and clasp which Madame had publicly declared had been brought to her from her father's grave by spirits at the Eddy Séance. Home set about tracing Madame's antecedents and unravelling her spiritualistic phenomena. He published the result of his investigations in *Lights and Shadows of Spiritualism*, which appeared about the same time as *Isis Unveiled* (October, 1877).

Madame used to declare sententiously: Mediums cannot deceive me; I know more about it than they do." But she did not know that Home knew what the public wanted to know about her past. "In Russia," wrote Home, "till recently they [honor tokens, medals, etc.] were without exception returned to the Government."<sup>2</sup> This Solov'yoff confirms.<sup>3</sup>

It was a brother medium, then, and no imaginary Mahatma and H.P.B. who forced Madame to quit the States. She writes: "It is for this reine that I am going forever to India, for very shame and vexation. I want to go where no one will know my name. Home's malignity until has ruined me forever in Europe."<sup>4</sup> A born fighter, an unscrupulous Buddha writer with a vitriolic pen, she could not face one who had studied nature her tactics and knew her occult career. But her flight from America is not yet.

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H.P.B. had spent two years in the composition of a huge compilation of about 1,270 pages, mostly from unacknowledged, second hand sources, under the title of *Isis Unveiled, A Master Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*. Nine years later she wrote that it was not spirits but living man who can draw before the eyes the picture of any book or ms. wherever existing who helped her.

Proof of their astral power—the astral light—may be found in the production of *Isis Unveiled*. . . . When I wrote *Isis*, I wrote it so easily [she tells her sister] that it was certainly no labour. . . . Someone who knows all dictated to me. . . . He allows me to copy what I write from MSS.,

and even from printed matter that pass before my eyes. . . Whence all this knowledge? If I were unknown, no Publisher or Editor would have ever paid any attention to me. . . It is all vanity and fashion.<sup>5</sup>

Somehow we prefer Max Müller's opinion:

There is nothing [in *Isis*] that cannot be traced back to generally accessible Brahmanic and Buddhistic sources, only everything is muddled, and misunderstood. If I were asked what Mme. Blavatsky's Esoteric Buddhism really is, I should say it was Buddhism misunderstood, distorted, caricatured. There is nothing in it beyond what is known already, chiefly from books that are now antiquated. The most ordinary terms are misspelt, misunderstood.<sup>6</sup>

Though said later to contain the wisdom of her Tibetan Masters and to be an exposition of Theosophy, *Isis* does but represent H.P.B.'s unstable mind in 1875-7. It does not teach the doctrine of reincarnation. It misrepresents the Buddhist doctrine of transmigration. *Isis* teaches that man is a being of a threefold nature. Not until she had come to India and learned something of Hindu and Buddhistic esoteric writings, did she endow him with a sevenfold nature.<sup>7</sup>

But let us hear what Mr. William Emmette Coleman<sup>8</sup> of San Francisco, an oriental scholar who spent three years in an exhaustive analysis of Mme. Blavatsky's writings, has to say of *Isis Unveiled*:

*In Isis Unveiled*, published in 1877, I discovered some 2,000 passages copied from other books without proper credit. By careful analysis I found that in compiling *Isis* about 100 books were used. About 1,400 books are quoted from and referred to in this work; but, from the 100 books which its author possessed she copied everything in *Isis* taken from and relating to the other 1,300. There are in *Isis* about 1,200 quotations and references to books that were copied at secondhand, from books other than the originals; and of this number only about 140 are credited, from which Madame Blavatsky copied at secondhand. The others are quoted in such a manner as to leave the

reader to think that Mme. Blavatsky had read and utilized the original works, and had quoted from them at firsthand, the truth being that these originals had evidently never been read by Mme. Blavatsky. . . . The books utilized in compiling *Isis* were nearly all current nineteenth century literature. . . .

To "Eliphas Levy," the apostate Abbé Constant, Madame was greatly indebted for much of her "learning." She met the author in Paris. Madame quoted from Figuier as from an original work "which now lies before me," but Coleman adds: As every word from Figuier was copied from Des Moussex's *Magie au Dix-neuvième Siècle*, pp.451-457, the word *lies* in the sentence used by her is quite *á propos*. He gives a list of many authors whose words Madame rifled.<sup>9</sup>

As a result of Coleman's criticism, Sinnett's works were corrected in parts, and references supplied to *Isis* and *The Secret Doctrine* after Madame's death. But no attempt had been made to deny or discredit the facts contained in Coleman's articles.<sup>10</sup>

Olcott stated that when Mme. Blavatsky wrote *Isis*, her library contained about 100 books, which confirms Coleman's critical judgment.<sup>11</sup> Madame states that the story of the massacre of the innocents in the Gospel is taken from the *Bhagavad Gita*.<sup>12</sup>

It is plain, writes Coleman, that she had never seen when she wrote *Isis* either the *Bhagavad Gita* or the *Bhavagad Purana* but<sup>6</sup> copied from J. Jacollot's works, "which are full of forgeries and<sup>7</sup> blunders and are worthless productions.<sup>13</sup> The Theosophist tells<sup>8</sup> us that "the quotations in *Isis Unveiled* are minutely correct." As<sup>9</sup> a matter of fact, there is not a word about a massacre in the<sup>10</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*. The reference is to the *Bhagavad Purana*. Now,<sup>11</sup> according to modern scholars—Max Müller, Professor Weber, Rhys<sup>12</sup> Davids, and others—the *Bhagavad Gita* was composed about the<sup>13</sup> third century of the Christian era, and the *Bhagavad Purana* about<sup>14</sup>

## THE STORY OF A GREAT ANTI-CHRISTIAN FRAUD

the tenth century of the same era, which knocks the bottom out of Madame's lying statement.

Professor Hopkins of Yale University, connects the worship of the Krishna child and his divine mother holding to her breast the infant deity with the worship of the Virgin and the *Madonna Lactans*, in these words:

So decided is the alteration and so direct is the connection between the later phase of Krishnaism and the Christianity of the early centuries of our era, that it is no expression of extravagant fancy but a sober historical statement to say that in all probability the Hindus, in this cult of the Madonna and Child, have in reality, though unwittingly, been worshiping the Christ-Child for fully a thousand years.<sup>14</sup> And Prof. R. G. Bhandarkar is of the same opinion.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*M.P.I.*, p.256.

<sup>2</sup>*Lights and Shadows of Spiritualism*, p.273 (second ed.).

<sup>3</sup>*M.P.I.*, p.266.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p.278

<sup>5</sup>A. P. Sinnett, *Incidents in The Life of H. P. Blavatsky*, pp.100, 205-6.

<sup>6</sup>*Nineteenth Century*, p.775 (1893).

<sup>7</sup>*The Key to Theosophy and The Secret Doctrine*.

<sup>8</sup>Member of the American Orient Society, the Royal Asiatic Society, the G. B. Pali Text Society, etc.

<sup>9</sup>*M.P.I.*, App. C.

<sup>10</sup>See *Proceedings*, Vol. IX.

<sup>11</sup>See Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves*, I, 264.

<sup>12</sup>*Isis*, p.199.

<sup>13</sup>*Religious Philosophy Journal* (September, 1889).

<sup>14</sup>*India Old and New*, p.167.

<sup>15</sup>*Indian Thought Past and Present*, chap. XI (1913).

## CHAPTER III

How the "Theosophical Twins" Mme. B. and Colonel Olcott, introduced the Theosophical Society into India, their journeyings and conversion "to the cause"; how Mme. B. produced phenomena (miracles) which were proved to be fraudulent.

### THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN INDIA—BOMBAY

Forced to leave America, the "Theosophical Twins" reached Bombay about the middle of February, 1879. They were greeted by members of the Arya Samaj, garlanded and festooned, lavishly entertained, and later handed a bill for the expenses of their own reception! Their ardor somewhat cooled, they speedily moved to less expensive quarters in Girgaum Back Road, in the native part of the city, where they lived for two years. Despite their American passports, the police followed them about. For some time they found in their ever-ready pens their surest weapons in keeping the wolf from the door, Olcott sending his hopeful screeds to the States and low Madame, hers to Russian journals. In 1880 the Coulombs, stranded in Ceylon, communicated with Madame, were invited to Bombay to join up with her, Mme. Coulomb as housekeeper and Coulomb as a handyman—he was good at carpentry. Before long, Mme. Coulomb was directed by H.P.B. to drop letters through the ceiling cloth in the Colonel's room and do other occult things.

In May, "the Twins" visited Ceylon and were formally made Buddhists. Olcott lectured against Christianity, and after two months among the coconuts and check-books of the hospitable island they returned to Bombay, where they found the Arya Samajists more than suspicious of them and their aims. A few months later the Samajists denounced them as ignorant frauds and adventurers.

## THE STORY OF A GREAT ANTI-CHRISTIAN FRAUD

About this time a valuable recruit joined them in the person of Damodar, a consumptive youth belonging to a wealthy Hindu family in Bombay.

Olcott and Madame were invited to pay a visit to Mr. A. P. Sinnett, the editor of *The Pioneer* at Allahabad. They came, but Madame, devoid of certain "properties," did very little in the way of phenomena. Later they were his guests at Simla for the hot weather. The whole station was agog with curiosity and social barriers were quietly pushed aside by those eager to witness some of her marvels.

Madame obliged by getting the Mahatmas to ring the occult call-bell, to drop flowers from the ceiling, to supply missing cups, and so forth. These alleged marvels are fully described in Sinnett's *The Occult World* and *Esoteric Buddhism*.

### THE BROOCH INCIDENT

The Brooch phenomenon has been used by Theosophists continuously as proof positive of Mme. Blavatsky's occult powers and the benign interest taken by the Masters in the affairs of their followers, in spite of the fact that it has been fully exposed as sheer trickery.

The circumstances were as follows: At Simla, Mr. A. O. Hume, a government official and President of the newly formed Theosophical Society at Simla, gave a dinner at which an example of Madame's occult power was eagerly awaited. Quite casually, Madame asked Mrs. Hume if there was anything she particularly wished to have. Her hostess described a certain brooch which her mother had given her, but which she gave to someone else, who had in turn parted with it. Madame took a coin from her watch chain, wrapped it in two cigarette papers and hid it in her dress. Sinnett narrates:

At the close of dinner, she said to Mr. Hume that the paper in which the coin had been wrapped was gone. A

little later in the drawing room, she said that the brooch would not be brought into the house, but that it must be looked for in the garden; and then as the party went out, accompanying her, she said she had clairvoyantly seen the brooch fall into a star-shaped bed of flowers. Mr. Hume led the way to such a bed in a distant part of the garden. A prolonged and careful search was made with lanterns, and eventually a small paper packet, consisting of two cigarette papers was found among the leaves by Mrs. Sinnett. This, being opened on the spot, they found to contain a brooch exactly corresponding to the previous description, and which Mrs. Hume identified as that which she had originally lost. None of the party, except Mr. and Mrs. Hume, had ever seen or heard of the brooch. . . .<sup>16</sup>

The dinner party of nine signed a paper setting forth the marvelous incident. As Theosophists, the Humes accepted the phenomenon as genuine and to be expected.

When Mr. Hormuaji Seervai, a Bombay jeweler, read the account of the brooch "miracle" in the papers, he at once realized from the description of the brooch that it was the identical one he had repaired for Madame Blavatsky. Mr. Hodgson learned this from the jeweler himself. Later, Mr. Hume himself publicly acknowledged that the brooch phenomenon was a clever piece of well planned fraud. But the Theosophical Society, whose motto, in Madame's, is "There is no religion higher than Truth," still publishes this fraud as proof of occult Mahatmic agency.<sup>17</sup>

Despite Sinnett's assurance<sup>18</sup>—"I now most unquestionably affirm that I shall in no case alter one syllable of the passages actually quoted from the Master's letters"—Hodgson discovered that he had corrected much bad spelling, awkward phrases, underlining, punctuation, etc., such as occur again and again in the Blavatsky-Couloster letters.<sup>19</sup>

No wonder Madame should tell Solovyoff that Sinnett "is splendid at editing." When Hodgson came into possession of

number of Mahatma letters, he lent them to Coleman, who, after a searching examination, wrote:

I find in them [the Mahatma letter in *Esoteric Bhuddism*] overwhelming evidence that all of them were written by Madame Blavatsky. . . . In these letters are a number of Extracts from Bhuddist books, alleged to be translations from the originals by the Mahatmic writers themselves. . . . I have traced to their sources each quotation from the Bhuddist Scriptures in the letter, and they were all copies from current English translations, including even the notes and explanations of the English translators. They were principally copies from Beal's *Catena of Bhuddist Scriptures from the Chinese*. . . . I have traced every Bhuddistic idea in these letters and in *Esoteric Bhuddism*, and every Bhuddistic term such as *Devachan*, *Avitchi*, etc., to the books whence Helena Petrovna Blavatsky derived them. . . . The writer of those letters was an ignoramus in Sanskrit and Tibetan. . . . *Esoteric Bhuddism*, like all of Madame Blavatsky's works, was based upon wholesale plagiarism and ignorance. . . . The Koot Hoomi letter to Hume and Sinnett contained garbled and spurious quotations from Bhuddist sacred books, manufactured by the writer to embody her own peculiar ideas, under the fictitious guise of genuine Bhuddism.<sup>20</sup>

An account of the manner in which the K.H. letter to Sinnett, received at Headquarters, Bombay, really arrived there—by means of a trap fixed over a slot, or through slits in the ceiling, and released by Coulomb at an arranged signal by Madame—is given by Hodgson in his Report.<sup>21</sup>

As to the moonlight apparitions of Mahatmas at the Crow's Nest, Bombay, and at Headquarters, Adyar, Hodgson considers, after close investigation of both premises and careful questioning of those concerned, that a confederate in disguise is generally an easy and sufficient explanation of them, and the Coulombs testified that they had impersonated the Great Ones several times in both places.

Indeed the Coulombs gave a convincing demonstration <sup>before</sup> Hodgson.

But let us hear Mrs. Besant: "If human evidence can ever substantiate a fact, the appearance (and therefore the existence) <sup>of the</sup> Masters is placed beyond the possibility of doubt."<sup>22</sup> And from the lady for whom the evidences of Christianity were strong enough!

Sinnett's *The Occult World* (1881) and *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883) are both based on alleged Mahatmic letters received <sup>through</sup> H.P.B. by himself and Hume. But a long passage in *The Occult World*, first edition (June, 1881), was quickly detected to have <sup>been</sup> deliberately plagiarized from a lecture delivered by H. K. Kidd <sup>in New York, and published in</sup> *The Banner of Light*, August, 1881.

The Mahatmic effusion was dated only two months later.

#### FROM KIDDLE'S LECTURE, AUG., 1880

Ideas rule the world; and as man's minds receive new ideas, laying aside the old and the effete, the world advances. Society rests upon them; mighty revolutions crumble before their onward march. It is just as impossible to resist their influx as to stay the progress of the tide, etc.

#### MAHATMIC LETTER, DEC. 10TH, 1880

Ideas rule the world; and as man's minds receive new ideas, laying aside the old and effete, the world will advance, mighty revolutions will spring up from them, creeds and even powers will crumble before their irresistible force. It will be just as impossible to resist their influence when the time comes as to stay the progress of the tide, etc.

When confronted with the extract from *The Banner of Light* the Mahatma, Koot Hoomi, explained, through Madame of cou

I was physically very tired by a ride of forty-eight hours consecutively and half asleep. . . . When I awoke, I found it [the letter] had already been sent off. . . . I had never heard of his [Kettle's] existence. . . .

## THE STORY OF A GREAT ANTI-CHRISTIAN FRAUD

And H.P.B. wrote to Sinnett in her own name: "K. H. Plagiarized from Kiddle. Ye gods and little fishes! . . . plagiarized from the *Banner of Light*, that sweet spirits' slop basin—the asses."

On all this the Committee of the S.P.R. remarks: "The proof of deliberate plagiarism, aggravated by a fictitious defence, is irresistible."<sup>23</sup> The plagiarized passage was omitted from later editions of *The Occult World*, but without a word of explanation.

It is interesting to note that when Madame was present, the Mahatma letters to Sinnett would be found on his desk, or enclosed in other letters, or dropped from the ceiling; but when she was away, the Master did not disdain to use the ordinary post and telegraph services. Sinnett declared that "the inherent evidence of the style was enough to make the suggestion that she might have written them a mere absurdity."

With the advance of years, however, a modicum of common sense returned to the credulous ex-editor, and he modified somewhat his earlier opinion: "The letters were not, in the beginning, what I imagined [a correct word!] them to be—letters actually written by the Masters." Though inspired by K.H., they were for the most part "dictations of a competent clairaudient amanuensis, and Mme. Blavatsky was generally the amanuensis in question." It is also of interest to note that after Mohini joined Madame's staff, the Masters' letters began to deal more exclusively with Hindu mystic philosophy in which Sinnett was anxious to be instructed.

Most of the letters were written on a peculiar sort of hand-made rice paper, a quantity of which Olcott assured Theosophists later he had brought from Kashmir. H.P.B. used to carry some of this paper about with her. It was some of this rice paper that Olcott accused Judge of abstracting from H.P.B.'s rooms in London after her death on which to forge Mahatmic letters in his own interest.

<sup>24</sup>On the whole, then (writes Hodgson), I think I am justified in saying that the phenomena relied on by Mr.

Sinnett in *The Occult World* can be accounted for much more satisfactorily than can the performances of any ordinary professional conjuror by the uninitiated observer, however acute; that the additional details I have been able to furnish in connection with some of the incidents Mr. Sinnett has recorded, clearly show that he has not been in the habit of exercising due caution for the exclusion of trickery; and that he has not proceeded in accordance with those "scientific modes of investigation" which he expressly declared<sup>25</sup> he regarded as necessary for the task he attempted.

<sup>16</sup>*The Occult World*, pp.45-9.

<sup>17</sup>See *The Occult World*, pp.66-67; *Proceedings*, Society for Psychical Research (S.P.R.) Vol. IX, p.267; Sinnett's silence in his critique on Hodgson's Report concerning the brooch is significant; *Religious Movements in India*, pp.221.

<sup>18</sup>*The Occult World*, p.100 (first ed.) ; p.69 (third ed.) ; and p.85 (eighth ed.).

<sup>19</sup>*The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (1923), No. 130, of which only § formed the basis of *The Occult World* with its astonishing occult revelations.

"Sinnett considered himself at liberty to make about fifty literal corrections, seventy-five alterations of style in type (capitals, italics, two hundred punctuations, thirty significant and obvious)."

<sup>20</sup>*M.P.I.*, App. C, pp.363-4.

<sup>21</sup>*Proceedings*, III, 278, 305.

<sup>22</sup>*H. P. Blavatsky and the Masters of Wisdom*, pp.10-12 (1907).

<sup>23</sup>*Proceedings*, Vol. III, 297.

<sup>24</sup>*Proceedings*, Vol. IX, p.156.

<sup>25</sup>*The Occult World*, p.35.

## CHAPTER IV

Setting up the Theosophical Society headquarters at the Adyar, Madras; the increase of phenomena and converts; how the London Society for Psychical Research (S.P.R.) sent out an agent (Hodgson) to investigate; how Mme. B's accomplices M. and Mme. Coulomb abandoned the Theosophical Society and published incriminating correspondence.

### PHENOMENA: ADYAR, MADRAS

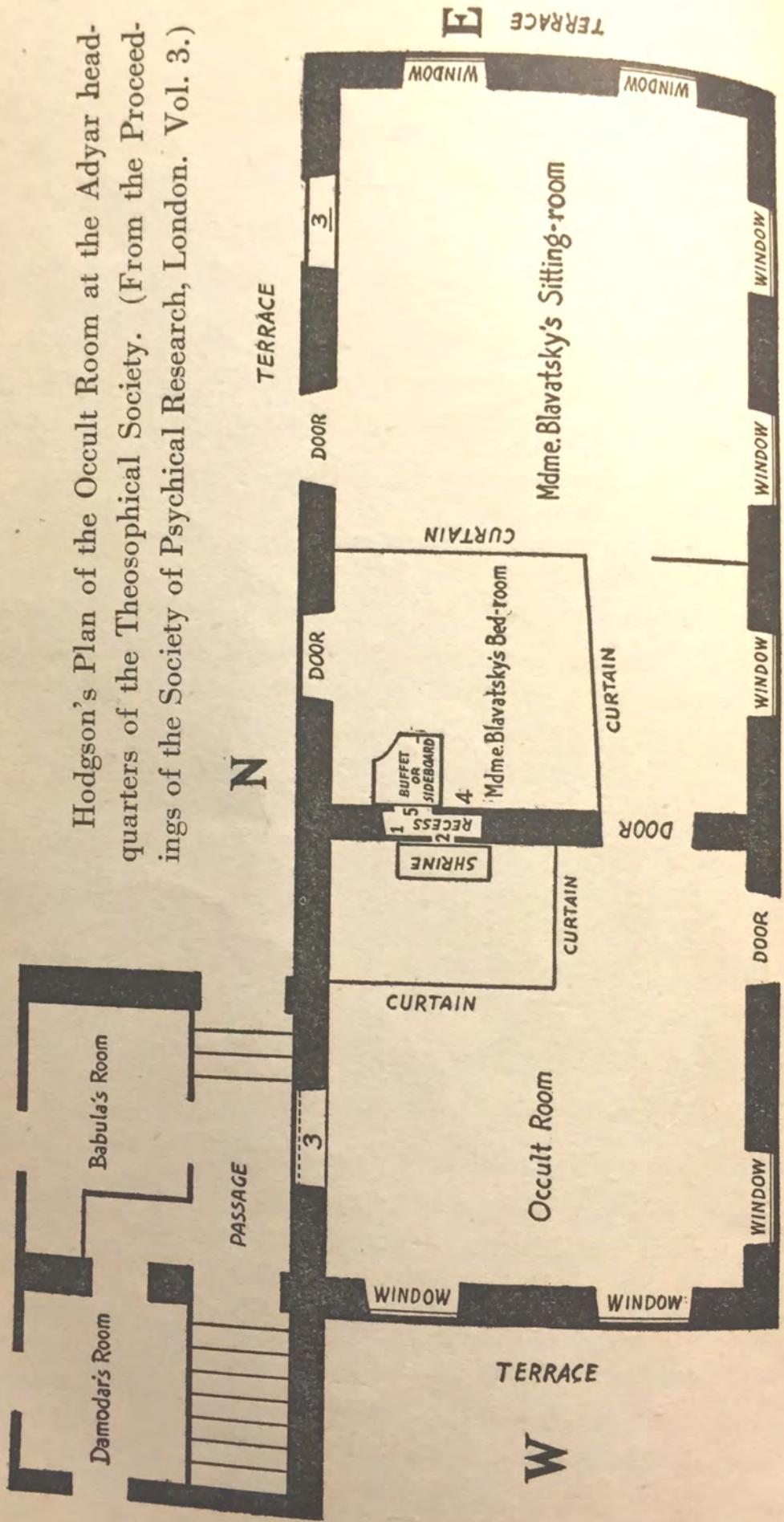
In December, 1880, the headquarters of T. S. were transferred from Bombay to a delightful suburb of Madras. The property, now some 260 acres, is dotted with bungalows where, amid graceful palms and greenery of every description, reside Theosophists from many countries. Taking the air one late afternoon, now many years ago, the writer happened on Mrs. Annie Besant, who smilingly invited him to visit headquarters and view the oriental library with its treasure of palm-leaf manuscripts.

With Mme. Blavatsky came the Coulombs—the husband, as librarian and general manager of the property, the wife, as assistant corresponding secretary and housekeeper.

### THE OCCULT ROOM AND SHRINE

Mme. Blavatsky occupied the upper story of the main building, which at first consisted of one large room, a portion of which was partitioned off as her bedroom. There were two windows at each end, east and west, and three on the south side. The room was entered on the north side from a terrace which ran all around. On the west side an Occult Room was built, one window being converted into a doorway leading from Madame's bedroom into the Occult Room; the other window was bricked up with one layer of bricks,

Hodgson's Plan of the Occult Room at the Adyar headquarters of the Theosophical Society. (From the Proceedings of the Society of Psychical Research, London. Vol. 3.)



## THE STORY OF A GREAT ANTI-CHRISTIAN FRAUD

so as to form on the bedroom side a recess of fifteen inches, which Madame used as a clothes closet for some time. Later, this too was bricked in with one layer of bricks, leaving a space between; and a large piece of furniture was placed against it on the bedroom side. The Shrine, a wooden cabinet three or four feet square and one foot deep, hung against the one brick thick partition on the Occult Room side. A space in front of the Shrine was curtained off so as to form an inner room. On occasion the doors of the Shrine would be opened to allow members to gaze on the alleged portrait of Mahatma Koot Hoomi. Before the Shrine incense was burned, and in it petitions were placed. Later, the doors being again opened, written replies would be found purporting to come directly from the Mahatma K. H.

Owing to the phenomena at the Shrine, membership increased, and the fame of the Theosophical Society spread abroad.

In May, 1884, the London Society for Psychical Research (S.P.R.) appointed a committee to take evidence of alleged psychic phenomena. Mme. Blavatsky, Olcott, and Mohini, who left Bombay on February 21, 1884, gave evidence in London.

Madame, while in London, did not forget to distribute her favors to friends in the form of K.H. letters, but reminded them through the same medium that when she went, her *aura* would depart too, and, therefore, they need expect no more K.H. letters—a prudent foresight.

At Adyar a committee of seven, which included Coulomb by Madame's special appointment, was formed to look after the affairs of the Society during the absence of Madame and Olcott. The Coulombs were left in sole charge of her rooms; Damodar, the Hindu Secretary, had the keys of the Occult Room and the Shrine.<sup>1</sup> Soon a quarrel took place between the committee members and the Coulombs, who refused to allow a committee meeting to be held in H.P.B.'s room. There were also "high words" over household ex-

penses. Hints about tricks and sliding doors and faked phenomena were thrown out by Madame Coulomb, and a threat of startling revelations if bothered any further. Of all this H.P.B. was duly informed by letters from both sides. Meantime, the committee decided to impeach the Coulombs in an informal manner, and expel them from headquarters. But before they could act, Damodar placed before them a letter which he said had just been brought from K. by a chela in his astral body. It ran:

Madame Coulomb is a medium, and as such irresponsible for many things she may say or do. At the same time she is kind and charitable. One must know how to act towards her to make her a very good friend. It is my wish, therefore, that she shall continue in charge of the household business. . . . A good deal of reform is necessary, and can be made rather with the help than the antagonism of Madame Coulomb. . . . Show this letter to Madame Coulomb so that she may cooperate with you.

Why the Mahatma did not communicate directly with Dr. Hartmann may have surprised the committee, but the result of the communication was an armistice, and Mr. Lane Fox, Damodar, and Madame Coulomb went to the Nilgiri hills for a holiday.

Replies from Olcott and H.P.B., dated April 1, and 2, (1881) reached Madras on the 24th and, redirected, reached the addressee at Ootacamund on the 26th. On that very date, Damodar produced and forwarded to Madras a Mahatma K.H. letter, addressed to Dr. Hartmann. Here is an extract:

For some time already that woman had opened communication—a regular diplomatic *pourparlers*—with the enemies of the cause, certain padres. She hopes for more than 2,000 rupees from them if she helps them ruining or at least injuring the Society by injuring the reputation of the founders. . . .<sup>2</sup>

They . . . are ready to lay out a good sum for the ruin of the Society they hate. Moreover, the Jesuits of India are in direct understanding with those of London and Paris. . . .

THE STORY OF A GREAT ANTI-CHRISTIAN FRAUD

Keep all said above in strict confidence. . . . Let her not suspect you. . . . Be prudent, yet act without delay.<sup>3</sup>

On the outside of the letter Damador was directed to give this K.H. letter to Dr. Hartmann without delay. On the inside Dr. Hartmann was directed to show the letter to Mr. Lane Fox—the omniscient K.H. (alias H.P.B.), not knowing of course that Damodar and Lane Fox were at Ooty, on the Nilgiri Hills, and not at Adyar, Madras. Some six weeks earlier the same K.H. affirmed that Madame Coulomb is kind and charitable and must not be estranged but should be won to cooperate.

On their return from the hills to the Adyar, the Coulombs were deprived of the keys (May 18, 1884) and dismissed. They refused to leave. Lane Fox, a wealthy member of the committee, in whom Madame was deeply interested, struck a native policeman whom Coulomb called in, and was fined 250 rupees (about \$91.) for the offence. The public scented a first-class scandal. On inspection, sliding doors and panels were discovered, but the committee accused Coulomb of having made them, which was true; but only after Madame's departure and for the purpose of bringing her into disrepute, which was false.

THE BLAVATSKY-COULOMB LETTERS

On August 9th, Mme. Coulomb placed in the hands of the editor of *The Christian College Magazine* (C.C.M.), Madras, the organ of the Scotch Kirk missionaries, some seventy letters with a view to exposing the fraudulent nature of the Theosophical "phenomena" then being freely discussed.

The editor submitted the letters to the most skilled opinion at hand and to certain bank managers in Madras, who pronounced them genuine. These letters contained many references to leading government officials and Hindus, with details of what happened when Madame B. was staying with them, or when she met them all

over India.<sup>4</sup> But as they also contained numerous instructions for the production of "phenomena," it was decided to publish a selection with a view to exposing the fraud of Madame Blavatsky and her accomplices. The Coulombs confessed unreservedly that they had been her accomplices. "These letters if genuine, unquestionably implicated Madame Blavatsky in a conspiracy to produce marvels of phenomena fraudulently."—Committee, S.P.R.

Most of the letters were in French, but, omitting passages dealing with the private affairs of Europeans and Indians, the editor of the *C.C.M.* published in parallel columns the text of a selection and an English translation with necessary commentary.

The letters in our possession [wrote the editor of the *C.C.M.*] are all marked with the impress of a single character—that of a woman, clever, witty, and passionate; ready of speech and fertile in resource, now full of kindness, now of fury and contempt. . . . To have drawn a character like the Madame Blavatsky of our letters, so full of daring contradictions, yet possessed of such breathing life and consistency, would be a literary achievement worthy of our greatest dramatist.<sup>5</sup>

While the Anglo-Indian press regarded the exposure as genuine, the Theosophical Society called it a conspiracy on the part of Protestant missionaries. Judge, the American vice-president, then in Europe, was at once sent out to Madras by the president, Olcott, and arrived in May or June, 1884.

In September, Dr. Hartmann issued *A Report of Observations Made During Nine Months at Headquarters*,<sup>6</sup> in which he denied the genuineness of the letters published in the *C.C.M.*; charged the missionaries with forming a conspiracy against the Theosophical Society; threatened to unmask the conspiracy in a court of law, and, while confessing to the existence at Headquarters of "sliding panels, trap doors, holes in the walls, etc., such as could be used for the production of occult phenomena," asserted that Monsi-

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Coulomb made them all *after* Madame Blavatsky's departure for Europe on February 21, 1884. For this statement no proof whatever was given. Indeed, the pamphlet containing it was later withdrawn, as being inaccurate and unauthorized. As Damodar had the keys of the Shrine and the Occult Room *after* Madame's departure, and the keys of Madame's rooms after May 17th, the Coulombs could not have had access to the Occult Room in order to fix panels in the back of the Shrine.

In a written statement given to Hodgson in March, 1885, Dr. Hartmann says:

Of the existence of a movable back to the Shrine and the filling in of the aperture in the wall, no one of us knew anything . . . because to make a thorough examination, it would have been necessary to take the shrine down, and we were prevented from doing this by the superstitious awe with which Mr. Damodar regarded the Shrine, and who looked upon every European who dared touch or handle "the Sacred Shrine" as a desecration.<sup>7</sup>

But when the examination was made on September 20, 1884, among others by Hartmann, Judge and "Ananda":

It was found that the back of the Shrine could be removed . . . that an aperture had existed which had been plastered up. . . . I must confess [continued Dr. Hartmann] that it seemed to me that if at that *inopportune moment* this new discovery . . . would have been made public, it would have had a bad effect on the public mind. . . . A gentleman who was present and who shared my opinions was of the opinion that the Shrine had been too much desecrated [N.B. not damaged] to be of any further use, and he burned the Shrine in my presence.<sup>8</sup>

The "gentleman" referred to was the vice-president, W. Q. Judge, sent out to "expose" the Coulomb-cum-missionaries' plot.

Clearly the burning of the Shrine shows that Hartmann and Judge had an inkling of the truth.

Hartmann, Judge, the T. S. London Lodge (in a pamphlet) Madame Blavatsky (in *The Pall Mall Gazette*) declared that case would be taken to the Law Court. Indeed, Madame said was hurrying back to Madras to commence proceedings against missionaries, although at the time she was writing to her Russian friend, Solovyoff (October, 1884) :

I am suspected, not only by my enemies, but even by my own Theosophists. . . . They have all clutched at the idea with such a delight, Olcott and Madame Gethard and the rest, that I have not even met with any pity . . . they [the missionaries] gave the Coulomb woman 10,000 rupees, as it is now proved, in order to destroy the Society.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, nothing of the sort had been proved. On the <sup>cont</sup> in April, 1885, the editor of *C.C.M.*, wrote: "We did not buy letters. They are still Mme. Coulomb's property. Dr. Hartmann and Mr. Subba Rao have known this since September 27th, year." He went on to say that Mme. Coulomb had only been p the ordinary rate, the paltry sum of 150 rupees (about \$54.).

On October 7, 1884, Madame Blavatsky, then in London, <sup>vi</sup> to *The Times*, stating:

The letters purporting to have been written by me are certainly not mine. Sentences here and there I recognize, taken from old notes of mine on different matters, but they are mingled with interpretations that entirely pervert their meaning. With these exceptions, the whole of the letters are a fabrication.<sup>10</sup>

But to Mme. Coulomb she had written "a masterpiece of folly." She exclaimed:

Oh! Madame Coulomb, what have I done to you that you should try to ruin me. . . . By talking and acting as you do, you will only gain one end, people will only say that you are a *fraud*.

To Coulomb she wrote:

Since my arrival at Adyar, I have truly and sincerely loved her, and since my departure I have thought only of

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buying something in Paris which she needed and of how I could put you in possession of 2,000 or 3,000 rupees in order that she might go and reside for the summer at Ooty. . . . Why do you wish to make the Colonel hate me and set against you all at Adyar? Why not quietly remain friends and wait for better days? . . . Why not accept the 2,000 rupees which Lane Fox offered you, and spend the hot weather at Ooty and the cool months with us as in the past? . . . Oh! my dear friend, how miserable and foolish is all this!<sup>11</sup>

A strange letter, surely, to one who had just accused her of forgery and fraud.

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<sup>1</sup>*Proceedings*, Vol. III, pp. 325, 373-4; *Report of Observations*, p.32.

<sup>2</sup>NOTE: A photograph of this letter appears on p.248 of *Who Wrote The Mahatma Letters* (1937).

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *Proceedings*, III, 279.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. *Proceedings*, III, 204, 224.

<sup>5</sup>C.C.M., Vol. II, pp.305-6.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. *Proceedings*, III, 224.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. *Proceedings*, III, 229.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, III, 225.

<sup>9</sup>M.P.I.

NOTE: Mr. A. B. Khun in *Theosophy* (New York, 1930) says the aim of his treatise is to present Mme. Blavatsky's career, "as it is told and believed by Theosophists, although it is admittedly already partly legendary." These being his "sources," we are not surprised at his writing: "Madame Coulomb bartered her incriminating material to the missionaries for a considerable sum of money."—(p. 178). W. Kingsland, having quoted the letter which Damodar was instructed by the Mahatma to hand to Dr. Hartmann to the effect that Mme. Coulomb "hopes for Rs. 2000" from the missionaries, adds: "that the Coulombs were paid by the Christian College authorities is acknowledged, though the exact amount that they received is uncertain." One is left to infer that this writer had seen a statement by the Christian College authorities acknowledging payment, *but that the amount paid was not stated.*

<sup>10</sup>*Incidents*, p.228.

<sup>11</sup>See C. E. Bechhofer Roberts, *The Mysterious Madame*, pp. 161-3 (1931).

## CHAPTER V

More Blavatsky-Coulomb letters for the production of spurious phenomena; how Hodgson confirms his investigations; how Mme. B. threatens prosecution, but instead of proceeding, flees from India. Extract from Hodgson's report.

### MORE BLAVATSKY-COULOMB LETTERS

In October, 1884, the *C.C.M.* published a second batch of Blavatsky-Coulomb letters.

In November the Committee of the *Society of Psychical Research*, decided to send to India Mr. Richard Hodgson, B.A., a Canadian Scholar of St. John's College, Cambridge, to obtain further information as to alleged Theosophic phenomena. He arrived in Madras on December 18, 1884, and left for London on March 26, 1885. One important object of his visit was to ascertain if possible, by examining the Blavatsky-Coulomb letters and by verifying the facts implied or stated in them and the explanations of the Coulombs concerning them, whether the letters were genuine or not.<sup>1</sup> On December 29th Madame Blavatsky arrived from London. Olcott had arrived earlier.

Hodgson accepted an invitation to stay at the Theosophical Society's headquarters, Adyar, from December 25th until January 3rd. He made frequent calls there until he left for England in March, 1885.

Hodgson was directed by his Society to cross-examine some of the principal witnesses for phenomena, to examine localities where phenomena were alleged to have happened, and to verify the statements of the Coulombs. For it is obvious—states the Committee:

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That no value for the purpose of psychical research can be attached to phenomena where persons like the Coulombs have been concerned if it can plausibly be shown that they might themselves have produced them, while at same time their unsupported assertion that they did not produce them cannot be taken by itself as evidence.<sup>2</sup>

In what frame of mind Hodgson began his important investigations can best be gathered from his Report to the Committee:

Indeed, whatever prepossessions I may have held were distinctly in favour of Occultism and Madame Blavatsky—a fact which, I think, is well known to several leading Theosophists. During my three months' investigations I had every opportunity of examining the witnesses for the Theosophical phenomena and of comparing in detail the disputed documents with the undoubted handwriting of Madame Blavatsky.<sup>3</sup>

Hodgson sent to London an ample selection of the Blavatsky-Coulomb letters together with undoubted letters of Madame Blavatsky, which were submitted by the Committee, S.P.R., for the opinion of experts in handwriting.

Slowly and methodically Hodgson proceeded with his investigations. He visited Poona and Bombay, the former headquarters, the Crows' Nest, where he tested the accuracy of alleged phenomena and the statements of the Coulombs collected at Madras, who said it was they who, on several occasions, impersonated Mahatmas and faked phenomena at Mme. Blavatsky's request. It was not, therefore, the Society's "greatest enemies, thieves and robbers;" it was not only "the Boys [Hindus] who gave him all the information he needed," according to Mme. Blavatsky;<sup>4</sup> it was not only "known enemies of the Theosophical Society," he "ignoring all evidence tendered by friends," according to Mrs. Besant;<sup>5</sup> but it was Madame Blavatsky herself who stated that "she had been unable to discover what had become of the Shrine," and who confessed that "it had three sliding panels in the back that it might be more easily taken to pieces and

packed.”<sup>6</sup> It was Dr. Hartmann,<sup>7</sup> President Olcott,<sup>8</sup> Damodar,<sup>9</sup> and Babbajee, these being the chief witnesses “from personal experience” for the Tibetan Brotherhood, besides Mme. Blavatsky, who all produced a very bad impression on the agent of the S.P.R. Both Damodar and Babbajee were convicted of falsehoods. Of the latter Hodgson writes that he is “eagerly ready out of gratitude for sheltering kindness [being homeless] received from Madame Blavatsky, to dispense on her behalf most freely with the truth.”<sup>10</sup> Only after repeated questioning did Damodar and Hartmann give a halting account of the Shrine, which they said had been removed into Damodar’s adjoining room on September 20, 1884, only to disappear mysteriously the following morning. They thought that the Coulombs or the missionaries might have stolen it. We now know (from Hartmann’s written statement of March 13, 1885) that Judge had destroyed the Shrine on September 29, 1884, a fact of which Hartmann was well aware.<sup>11</sup> After this confession of Hartmann, Mr. Hume proposed that Madame Blavatsky, Damodar, and two other natives should resign; that the disputed letters should be declared genuine; that most of the phenomena should be declared fraudulent; and that Hartmann should withdraw the defense pamphlets. But only the clause concerning the pamphlets was carried.<sup>12</sup>

Had Mr. Khun carefully studied Hodgson’s Report and not relied on what is written by Theosophists, he would hardly have written: “. . . he rendered an entirely *ex parte* judgment in that he acted as Judge, accuser, and jury, and gave no hearing to the defense . . . that he accepted the word of the Coulombs . . .”

Of Hartmann’s Report (February, 1885), H.P.B. gives a fantastic account:

“They [the T.S. committee] sat three days and nights on the letters and documents, called more than 300 witnesses. They brought in a verdict entirely acquitting me, and many letters were shown to be forgeries of my writing. . . .” One only of the letters referred

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to, and only on request, was shown to General Morgan in the presence of witnesses. In his second Report (February, 1885), Hartmann stated that there would be no prosecution of Madame Coulomb and the missionaries!

Having finished his investigations, Hodgson left for London about the middle of March, 1885. Judge departed to America, and Damodar took a journey to the Himalayas, "where subsequent proceedings interested him no more," for his frozen body was discovered by the roadside; he, having dismissed his coolies, set out naked and without food to reach the Master.

As it was not Mme. Blavatsky who had publicly charged Madame Coulomb with forgery, but General Morgan, and it was he who had refused to withdraw the charge, Madame Coulomb set on foot legal proceedings against him. But at that junction H.P.B.'s doctor induced Madame Coulomb's friends to postpone the case, as Madame Blavatsky, a material witness, was dangerously ill. After several delays the patient recovered, and on March 25th Madame Coulomb's solicitor demanded an apology from General Morgan by April 2nd. The General replied on March 31st, refusing to apologize. The very next day, April 1st, Olcott "gave Madame Blavatsky permission to leave India;" and she secretly embarked on a French steamer at Madras the next day, April 2nd, as "Madame Helen and Maid." Unquestionably, she fled to escape cross-examination as a witness in the Coulomb-Morgan case. Had she been able to clear her character, not all the Theosophic forces in India or alleged Mahatmas in Tibet could have restrained her or sent her out of India.

Two days after her flight, there appeared in the Madras Mail this note:

### The Theosophists:

Colonel Olcott writes on behalf of the General Committee of the Theosophical Society to say that "as a number of copies of a pamphlet entitled "Report of the result of the investigations into the charges brought against Ma-

dame Blavatsky," have been circulated, it is my duty to state that the issue has not been ordered by the General Council, nor authorized by the Committee.<sup>13</sup>

What a fiasco! Hartmann's Report had been put together and published broadcast only six weeks earlier from headquarters, while Olcott, H.P.B., Judge and other Theosophic lights were living there.<sup>14</sup>

After a thorough survey of all the evidence available, Hodgson came to the following conclusions:

1. That the letters in the Blavatsky-Coulomb correspondence were written by Mme. Blavatsky, a fact that was corroborated by the results of enquiries into the details and related incidents.
2. That most of the alleged Mahatma Koot Hoomi letters were written by Mme. Blavatsky, though a few were probably written by Damodar.
3. That Damodar as well as the Coulombs cooperated with Mme. Blavatsky in the production of spurious marvels.
4. That Mme. Blavatsky's evidence for the existence of Mahatmas is worthless.
5. That Olcott's evidence is so "fundamentally at variance with fact" in so many important points that it became impossible to place the slightest value upon his evidence.

I finally had no doubt whatever that the phenomena connected with the Theosophical Society were part of a huge fraudulent system worked by Mme. Blavatsky with the assistance of the Coulombs and several other confederates, and that not a single genuine phenomenon could be found among them all.<sup>15</sup>

#### THE HAND-WRITING

It was not the handwriting alone that convinced Hodgson—Madame and Sinnett would have the public believe—that the Blavatsky-Coulomb letters were genuine, but much corroborative evidence such as the many detailed allusions to Indian civilians—prominent Hindus and Europeans, and numerous errors in English.

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Here are a few of the many to be found in Hodgson's Report, but not in the carefully "edited" *The Occult World* and *Esoteric Buddhism*.

### 1. In the K.H. Letters:

your's, fulfill, dispell, thief's, quarreling, vanted, profound, montain, skeptic, direc-tly, una-cquainted, discerning, En-glish;

We mortals never have and never will agree on any subject entirely.

One who understands tolerably well English.

The best they know how; so more the pity for them.

### 2. Madame Blavatsky's undoubted letters:

your's, expell, thief's, quarreling, perfec-tly, cha-nged, return-ing, Beacon-sfield;

They have never and never will rush into print; Olcott says you speak very well English; and left to do the best they know how; So more the pity for those.

Hodgson's Report contains facsimiles of a number of the Blavatsky-Coulomb letters and a plan of the Occult Room with its Shrine.<sup>16</sup>

But to appreciate fully the force of the evidence which led him to conclude that the letters and phenomena were fraudulent, the appendices to his Report should be studied.<sup>17</sup> For many, however, the verdict of the English experts in handwriting, which we subjoin, will suffice to form a judgment:

19, Bedford Row  
LONDON, W.C.  
March 7th, 1885.

In compliance with your instructions I have carefully examined and compared several documents you have submitted, which are contained in two packets.

On placing Mme. Blavatsky's genuine, or acknowledged, handwriting in juxtaposition [with the doubtful ones], I really cannot see that there has been any attempt to disguise the hand [in the letters]. Every character of her handwriting may be traced throughout. . . . If she in-

tended any of them to be in a feigned hand, I can only say that the disguise is so flimsy that any expert would not notice the attempt.

[Signed] Fredk. Geo. Nethercliff.

On a second batch of Blavatsky-Coulomb letters being submitted to him shortly afterwards, Nethercliff returned them in one packet along with the undoubted writings of Mme. Blavatsky sent for comparison, with the following remarks:

The whole of the writings contained in this packet are by the hand of Mme. Blavatsky, whether acknowledged to be genuine or otherwise. They vary in the degree of care with which they are written, but in my opinion there is no attempt to disguise the hand.

[Signed] F.G.N.<sup>18</sup>

Yet with all this first-hand and expert evidence before her, Mrs. Besant writes: "It has always been a mystery to me how anyone could *read* those letters and believe them to have been written by Mme. Blavatsky."<sup>19</sup> But Annie Besant had long before burned the barque of logical reasoning when she landed on the nebulous shore of Theosophical credulity.

#### MRS. BESANT'S DEFENCE

In her attack on Hodgson's Report (*Time*, March, 1891), Mrs. Besant states correctly that Mr. Hume wrote to the *Calcutta Statesman* (September, 1884) to say that in his opinion Mme. Blavatsky "was too shrewd a woman to have ever *written* to anyone anything that could convict her of fraud."<sup>20</sup> But on that occasion (1891) and again in 1907, when she published *H. P. Blavatsky and the Masters of Wisdom*,<sup>21</sup> and in later editions, Mrs. Besant has designedly omitted to mention that in his Report Hodgson has explicitly stated that as a consequence of the evidence which he had placed before Hume the latter was convinced that the letters had actually been written by Mme. Blavatsky.<sup>22</sup> In his reply to her *Time* attack Hodgson repeats this statement.<sup>23</sup> Yet Mrs. Besant more than once tells

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her readers she had carefully read Hodgson's Report. The wilful suppression of this relevant fact (and there are other instances) has been frequently repeated during the past quarter of a century by Theosophical writers.

Against the opinion of the English experts, Nethercliff and Sims (of the British Museum), Mrs. Besant quotes that of the German Court Expert, Herr Ernst Schulze, who attested on oath that a certain K.H. letter submitted to him together with a genuine Blavatsky letter "has not the remotest resemblance with the letter of Madame Blavatsky." But the comparison limps. The Blavatsky-Coulomb, the K.H. letters, and the genuine letters of Mme. Blavatsky submitted to the English experts had all been written *before* the C.C.M. exposure in Madras, whereas the K.H. letters and the letter of Mme. Blavatsky submitted to the German Expert were written, *the one in September, 1884*, and the other in October, 1885.<sup>24</sup> The latter letter therefore was some twelve months later than the date when the first batch of Blavatsky-Coulomb letters<sup>25</sup> had appeared in *The Christian College Magazine* (September, 1884). To be of evidential value, Hodgson replied, the Blavatsky letter should have been written *before* the K.H. letter. He pointed out that while at Adyar, he could not get a specimen of H.P.B.'s writing except what she herself offered to write there and then. This he refused to accept. He appealed to Olcott, who stated that Madame Blavatsky was in the hands of the Society and should be guided by them.<sup>26</sup>

Mrs. Besant argues for the super-normal nature of Mahatma letters written in Sanskrit and Mahrathi, etc., because Mme. Blavatsky did not know these languages, but she forgets that Madame's confederates did. When, however, A. D. Ezekiel prepared a question for the Mahatma in the Arabic language and in Hebrew characters, about the interpretation of a specific portion of the Kabbala, the reply had not the slightest reference to the Kabbala.<sup>27</sup>

BLAVATSKY, BESANT AND CO.

SPECIMENS OF THE BLAVATSKY-COULOMB LETTERS

In sore need of money to pay for the Adyar premises, her traveling expenses, and to feed her hungry helpers, H.P.B. paid visits to rich Hindus likely to help the cause of Theosophy. At Poona she was advised to approach a wealthy relative of her friends, the Ezekiels, who, if interested, might contribute a substantial sum. But the native gentleman, wanting value for money, wished first to witness some convincing phenomenon which would prove the existence of Mahatmas. This, Madame, being in strange surroundings, was unable to furnish. She told him that having mentally asked Master, He replied that even if the proof required of the existence of the Masters was given, Mr. Sassoon would not have the moral courage to join the Society; adding, however, the important remark that as she was not *quite* sure she had heard the astral reply correctly, she had asked Master to confirm it by telegram. Then she at once wrote to her confederate, Mme. Coulomb, at Adyar:

Now, dear, let us change the programme. Whether *something* succeeds or not, I must try. Jacob Sassoon, the happy proprietor of a score of rupees, is anxious to become a Theosophist. He is ready to give 10,000 rupees to buy and repair the headquarters; he said to Colonel [Ezekiel, his cousin, arranged all this], if only he saw a little phenomenon, got the assurance that the *Mahatmas* could hear what was said, or give him some *other sign of their existence* (?!!). Well, this letter will reach you the 26th, Friday. Will you go up to the Shrine and ask K.H. to send me a telegram that would reach me about 4 or 5 in the afternoon same day, worded thus: "Your conversation with Mr. Jacob Sassoon reached Master just now. Were the latter even to satisfy him, still the doubter would hardly find the moral courage to connect himself with the Society—Ramalinga Deb." If this reaches me on the 26th, even in the evening, it will still produce a tremendous impression. Address, care of N. Khanadallavalla, Judge, Poone. Je ferai le reste. Cela coûtera quatre ou cinq roupies. Cela ne fait rien.

Yours truly, [Signed] H.P.B.

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Mme. Coulomb showed Hodgson an official receipt for the telegram sent in the name of Ramalinga. The telegram was sent from the San Thomé Post Office, the nearest to the Theosophical Headquarters at Adyar, to Mme. Blavatsky at Poona on October 26th. It contained the same number of words. Sassoond had left when the telegram arrived, so Madame missed a possible 10,000 rupees.

Dear M. Coulomb,

I think this is what you ought to do. Try, if you think it will succeed, to have a larger audience than our own silly servants only. It is worthwhile, because the saucer of the Adyar might become as historical as the Simla cup. . . .

H.P.B.

An account of the "Cup of Simla" may be read in Sinnett's *The Occult World*.

My dear Madame Coulomb and Marquis,

Now is the time to come into the open; don't let us hide ourselves. The *General* is going to Madras on business; he will be there on Monday and will remain two days. He is president of the Society here [Ooty, Hill Station] and wishes to see the Shrine. . . . He told me he anticipates seeing some phenomena. In the first case, beg K.H., whom you see every day, or Christoforo, to uphold the family honour. Tell him that a flower will do and that if the pot de chambre *should break* under the load of curiosity, it would be well to replace it there and then—Damn the others—this one is worth his weight in gold. . . .

This is the time to do something. Turn the General's head, and he will do anything for you, especially if you are with him at the time as Christophe. I send you a possible request (lit. an "in case of")—a letter from Mahatma in case the gentleman should want a reply.

L.M.

In case of (En case):

Can say nothing now—and will let you know at Ooty.

[Signed] K.H.

Mme. Coulomb explained that these extracts refer to a certain saucer which, it was agreed with Mme. Blavatsky, should be "accidentally" broken when the Shrine doors were opened. The pieces were to be replaced in the Shrine and a sound saucer of the same pattern substituted through the opening at the back of the Shrine in Mme. Blavatsky's bedroom. Now it is not disputed that a saucer phenomenon took place in the presence of General Morgan. Indeed, the General gave a long account of it in *The Theosophist*, December, 1883, which, on the whole, is consistent with Mme. Coulomb's account. According to the General, the saucer was leaning against one of the doors *inside* the Shrine. This position was certainly an unusual one, and suggests its having been put in from behind. The General suggested, to console the distressed Coulomb, that the broken pieces of the saucer, said by them to have been highly treasured by Mme. Blavatsky, might be glued together; and Coulomb ostensibly went out to get his glue pot, but in fact slipped into Madame's bedroom and replaced the broken pieces by a new saucer of like pattern. Damodar, who was watching and listening intently in front of the Shrine, suddenly exclaimed: "There is a message," and opening the Shrine, took out the cloth in which the pieces had been wrapped. To the astonishment of all, he extracted the saucer, whole and entire. A miracle, a Mahatmic miracle! The General, fully convinced of the existence and power of Mahatma, returned to Ootacamund and spread the glad tidings over the Nilghiri Hills. After the Coulomb exposure, however, Hodgson examined the broken pieces and the whole saucer. He did more, he visited the shop in the Broadway, Madras, where Mme. Coulomb alleged she had bought the saucers, and found that her statement was true and that they had cost two rupees eight annas, on July 1883. The phenomenon happened in August, 1883. Madame had playfully named the Coulombs *Marquis* and *Marquise*. The initials L. M. stand for *Luna Melanchonica*, the name Madame had given to the opening in the back of the Shrine.

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Ootacamund, 1885.

Dear Marquis,

If only I could have my beloved Christoforo with me here . . . darling Marquis, I confide to you the destiny of *my children*—Take care of them and make them work miracles. Perhaps it would be better to let one fall upon the head of someone?

H.P.B.

Hide the child after you have read it. (Cachetez l'enfant apres l'avoir lu.)

*Mes enfants* are apparently meant for K.H. documents. Christoforo, according to Mme. Coulomb, meant the mask with draperies which she used to don when personating Mahatmas—at a safe distance.<sup>28</sup> This agrees with what Solovyoff reports:

Miss X. and Mme. Y [Mme. Jelihovsky, the sister of Mme. Blavatsky] said to me one day, "Babula is most amusing. When Helen is busy and we have nothing to do, we have him in and ask about all sorts of things. He has a droll way of telling about all that goes on at Adyar."

Yes, and when I asked him, continued Mme. Y., if he had seen the Mahatmas, he laughs and says: "I have often seen them." "What are they like?" I ask, and he answers: "They are fine," he says, "Muslin," and then he laughs again.<sup>29</sup>

The flowers, vases, saucers, and building and repair material used at Adyar in the production of phenomena were all traced to their true sources by Hodgson. The receipt books of Faciole and Co., Broadway, Madras, showed that the vases, supposed to have come as a present from the Master, had in reality been purchased by Mme. Coulomb, M. Faciole accompanying her to the Chinese Curio dealer, Hassam and Co. In Hassam's books Hodgson found the entry payment by Faciole and Co. shortly after the date on which Colonel Olcott received the vases as a present from the Mahatma. In Faciole's books was the entry: "Received from Hassam and Co., May 25, 1883, One pair Flower vases, 7 rupees; One pair Flower

vases, 6 rupees, sent to Mrs. E. Coulomb." They had been entered to her account as housekeeper at Adyar; but on her instructions the entry was crossed off, and she paid cash. The very next day Col. Olcott recorded in his Diary, May 26th: "Fine phenomenon. Got pair of tortoise shell and lacquer vases with flowers in a cabinet, a moment before empty." When Hodgson wished to examine the vases, Olcott discovered that they had disappeared. Mme. Blavatsky of course denied all knowledge of them.

After hearing Hodgson and carefully weighing all the evidence before them, the Committee of The Society for Psychical Research, unanimously arrived at the following conclusions:

1. That the letters put forward by Mme. Coulomb and examined by the Committee and experts are undoubtedly written by Mme. Blavatsky, and suffice to prove she has been engaged in a long-continued combination with other persons to produce by ordinary means a series of apparent marvels for the support of the Theosophical movement.

2. That, in particular, the Shrine at Adyar, through which letters purporting to come from Mahatmas were received was elaborately arranged with a view to the secret insertion of letters and other objects through a sliding panel at the back, and regularly used for this purpose by Mme. Blavatsky or her agents.

3. That there is consequently a very strong general presumption that all the marvelous narratives put forward as evidence of the existence and occult power of the Mahatmas are to be explained as due (a) either to deliberate deception carried out by or at the instigation of Mme. Blavatsky, or (b) to spontaneous illusion or hallucination or unconscious mis-representation or invention on the part of the witnesses.

4. That after examining Mr. Hodgson's Report of his personal inquiries, they are of opinion that the testimony to these marvels is in no case sufficient, taking amount and character together, to resist the force of the general presumption above mentioned.

## THE STORY OF A GREAT ANTI-CHRISTIAN FRAUD

Accordingly they think it would be a waste of time to prolong the investigation.

Of "Madame Helen Petrovna Blavatsky," the Committee stated:

For our own part, we regard her neither as the mouth-piece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress. We think that she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting imposters in history.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Proceedings*, III, 203.

<sup>2</sup>*Proceedings*, III, 204.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p.208.

<sup>4</sup>*Incidents*, pp.293-6.

<sup>5</sup>*Time* (March, 1891).

<sup>6</sup>*Proceedings*, III, 220-1.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.210, 226, 237, 312.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.210, 237-9, 309-11, 386.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p.246, App. IV.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p.247.

<sup>11</sup>*Proceedings*, III, 220, 250.

<sup>12</sup>*Proceedings*, III, 145.

<sup>13</sup>*Proceedings*, Vol. IX, p.135.

<sup>14</sup>*Report of Investigations*, etc., Madras (1885).

<sup>15</sup>*Proceedings*, Vol. III, p.210; App. IV, pp.288-9.

<sup>16</sup>*Proceedings*, III, 380, and Judge's plan in Vol. IX, p.139.

<sup>17</sup>*Proceedings*, III, 318-380.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, III, 381-3.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. IX, p.146.

<sup>20</sup>*Proceedings*, Vol. IX, p.146.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. IX, p.27.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, III, 274.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. IX.

<sup>24</sup>Sinnett, *Incidents* (references to letters).

<sup>25</sup>The Blavatsky-Coulomb letters ran from 1880-1883.

<sup>26</sup>*Proceedings*, Vol. IX, p.148. Khun and Kingsland repeat Mrs. Besant.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p.147.

<sup>28</sup>Cf. *Proceedings*, Vol. III, pp.211-218. App. I and II, pp.318-22.

<sup>29</sup>*M.P.I.*, p.65.

<sup>30</sup>*Proceedings*, III, 204-7.

## CHAPTER VI

Mme. B's phenomena in Europe; her countryman Solovyoff explains her frauds. Mrs. Besant reviews Mme. B's book, *The Secret Doctrine*, and becomes a theosophist. The sources of the Secret Doctrine proved to be, not Mahatmic and Tibetan but nineteenth century books mostly superceded. Mme. B's death and character considered.

### PHENOMENA IN EUROPE

Having fled from Madras, and with Hodgson's Report now ringing in her ears, Mme. Blavatsky still continued to "prove" the existence of the Mahatmas and their benign interest in the affairs of the Theosophical Society by the same class of spurious phenomena—the astral call-bell, faked K.H. letters, showers of roses, etc.

An example or two must here suffice. The mysterious sounds heard by her visitors in Bombay, Madras, Paris, and elsewhere, Mme. attributed to an "astral bell" used by her Master when he wished to communicate with her. Of this phenomenon Sinnett wrote:

... I have repeatedly heard Mme. Blavatsky called in this way. . . . A little "ting," would suddenly sound, and Mme. Blavatsky would get up and go to her room to attend to whatever occult business may have been the motive of the summons.<sup>1</sup>

Now, according to Mme. Coulomb, the silvery sounds came from a mechanical device which H.P.B. tinkled by pressing her arm against her waist, where the bell was concealed. Sometimes her servant, Babula, would sound a bell in the distance or on the roof as directed. But we must not accept uncorroborated Mme. Coulomb's statements. Something suddenly fell at Madame's feet at Wurzburg, one day when the famous bell sounded.

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I hurried [writes Solovyoff, her visitor at the moment] to pick it up and found in my hands a pretty little piece of silver, delicately worked and strangely shaped. Helen Petrovna changed countenance and snatched the object from me. I coughed significantly, smiled and turned the conversation to different matters.<sup>2</sup>

Later, when Madame thought she had captured her countryman as an accomplice, he asked to see the magic bell. She produced it from her dress, showed it, but would not allow him to examine it. "A cunning little thing, my occult telegraph, through which I communicate with the Master." She placed it in a drawer, locked it, and said: "You shall know enough; you shall soon grow wise."<sup>3</sup> Another morning he called to witness promised phenomena. Madame sat in her big armchair while her dwarfish servant, "with a confused look in his dull eyes," stood at the other end of the table with several sheets of clean paper in front of him and a great pencil in his hand. As the setting was new, Solovyoff kept his eyes on Bavaji, while walking as customary about the room.

I saw that he was keeping his eyes open, with a sort of contortion of his whole body, while his hand, armed with the great pencil, was carefully tracing some letters on a sheet of paper. "Look, what is the matter with him?" exclaimed Madame Blavatsky. "Nothing particular," I answered. "He is writing in Russian." I saw her whole face grow purple. She began to stir in her chair, with an obvious desire to get up and take the paper from him. But with her swollen and almost inflexible limbs, she could not do so with any speed. I made haste to seize the paper, and saw on it a beautifully drawn Russian phrase. Bavaji was to have written in the Russian language with which he was not acquainted: "Blessed are they that believe," as said the great "Adept." He had learned his task well, and remembered the form of all the letters, but he had omitted two in the word *believe*. [The effect was precisely the same as if in English he had omitted the first two and last letters of the word.] "Blessed are they that *lie*," I read aloud, unable to control the laughter that shook me. "That is the

best thing I ever saw. Oh, Bavaji, you should have got your lesson up better for examination."<sup>4</sup>

The tiny Hindu fled and, Madame, with distorted face, <sup>etc.</sup> claimed! "So you think I taught him! It is the spirit 'elementals' who are making fun of him, poor fellow, and what a vexation for me!"

To Solovyoff, thought captured, Madame confided: "Suppose my books and *The Theosophist* had been a thousand times more interesting and serious, do you imagine I should have had any sort of success anywhere if behind all that there had not been the 'phenomena'?"<sup>5</sup> So we see that faked phenomena was necessary to draw recruits from Christianity, lightly held, it may be, to the Mahatma colors. It was these phenomena *only* which interested such men as Crooks, Flammarion, Charles Richet, and the English savants who established the London Society for Psychical Research. In *Why I Became a Theosophist* Mrs. Besant tells us that it was largely because of the phenomena she joined the T.S. But these phenomena are still defended and attributed by Theosophists to Mahatmic agency. If the phenomena were genuine and designed and executed by the Masters as a means of propaganda, it is passing strange that it should cease in India at the instance of two alleged foreign forgers and a few Scotch Kirk missionaries, and on Madame's departure!

To Sinnett's sneer, that Hodgson's "unfamiliarity with Indian and Indian ways," led him into "many serious mistakes," Hodgson's crushing reply was:

He may, indeed, mean that I ought not have been surprised to find that certain Chelas told me deliberate falsehoods, and that had I been more familiar with Indian ways, I should have known that such falsehoods were the natural outcome of "occultism."

It was not unfamiliarity with Indian ways that had led the Parsee gentleman, Mr. K. M. Seervai, formerly vice-President of the T.S. at Bombay, to give up all connection with the Society; or that led Mr. S. K. Chatterjee, formerly

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President of the Lahore Branch, to declare that the Society was "a huge imposture"; or that led Mr. A. O. Hume, long before the exposures of the Coulombs, to the opinion that some of the Chelas were morally untrustworthy, that the Shrine was a "conjurer's box," and that many other of Madame Blavatsky's phenomena were fraudulently produced; or that led Pundit Dayanund Saraswati, the President of the Aryr Samaj of India, to inform the public in 1882 that "neither Colonel Olcott nor Madame Blavatsky knows anything of Yog Vidya [Occult Science] as practiced by the Yogis of old," and that "for them to say that they perform their phenomena without apparatus, without any secret pre-arrangement and solely through the forces existing in nature and by what they call their will power, is to tell lies."<sup>6</sup>

### THE SECRET DOCTRINE (Madame's greatest work)

Sinnett writes: "Within the last few months of 1885, she began to receive the occult 'Inspiration' required for the production of the long-promised book on The Secret Doctrine."<sup>7</sup> According to Madame Blavatsky, its author, it is founded on "an archaic manuscript, a collection of palm leaves made impermeable to water, fire, and air by some specific process."<sup>8</sup> According to Coleman, "The book was the work of Madame Blavatsky—a compilation in her own language, from a variety of sources. . . ."

I find in this, "the oldest book in the world," statements copied from nineteenth century books, and in the usual blundering manner of Madame Blavatsky. Letters and other writings of the Adepts are found in *The Secret Doctrine*. In these Mahatmic productions I have traced various plagiarized passages from Wilson's *Vishnu Purana* and Winchell's *World Life* of like character to those in Madame Blavatsky's acknowledged writings.<sup>9</sup>

### ENTER MRS. ANNIE BESANT

It was *The Secret Doctrine* which turned Annie Besant from an ardent Atheist into a tempestuous Theosophist.

It appears from her *Autobiography* that for some time there had been growing a conviction that the "philosophy" which had led her to abandon her Christian home and children was not sufficient; that "life and mind" were other than she had dreamed. "Into the darkness shot a ray of light."<sup>10</sup> Then she began to dabble in spiritualistic phenomena. Next, a voice told her that light was near. It came in two volumes which Stead of *The Review of Reviews* gave her to review. She was "dazzled, blinded by the light;" and all her "puzzles, riddles, problems seemed to disappear . . . in that flash of illumination I knew that the weary search was over and that the very truth was found."—*The Secret Doctrine* of Mme. Blavatsky.

Proofs, for want of which she alleges she abandoned the faith of her fathers, no longer troubled Mrs. Besant. She sought out the writer of *The Secret Doctrine*, and begged to be enrolled a member of the Theosophical Society. Hodgson's Report was already four years old, and Mrs. Besant had never heard of it; but Mme. Blavatsky told her to go and read, and "if you come back—well . . ." Borrowing a copy, Mrs. Besant "read it and read it," and quickly saw—what some of the keenest brains in Britain had failed to detect—"the incredible character of the allegations."

Could I put such [evidence] against the frank, fearless nature that I had caught a glimpse of it, [it was her third visit to Madame] against the proud, fiery, truthfulness that shone at me from the clear blue eyes, honest, fearless as those of a noble child? . . . I laughed aloud at the absurdity and flung the Report aside, with the righteous scorn of an honest nature that knew its own kin when it met them, and shrank from the foulness and baseness of a lie.<sup>11</sup>

Little wonder, indeed, that the foreign forger should put her hands on the head of the neophyte and ejaculate: "May the Master bless you"; less wonder that in due time Madame's Mahatmic mantle should fall on the shoulders of Mrs. Besant. Had she not met her kin?

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Of *The Voice of Silence* Mrs. Besant says: "She wrote swiftly without any material copy before her," and on parts being read aloud by Mrs. Besant, "she looked at us like a startled child, wondering at our praises"—as well she might.

But let us have another opinion of this work written without any material copy. Coleman writes:

I have traced the sources . . . it is a potch-potch from Brahmanical books on Yoga and other Hindu writings; Southern Bhuddist books, from Pali and Sinhalese; and Northern Bhuddistic writings, from Chinese and Tibetan—the whole having been taken by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky from translations by and writings of European and other Orientalists of today. In this work are intermingled Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, Chinese, and Sinhalese terms—a manifest absurdity in a Tibetan work.

He then gives a list of the works plagiarized.

### MADAME'S DEMISE

On May 8, 1891, Mme. Blavatsky died in London, aged 60. By the S.P.R. she had been adjudged "one of the most interesting imposters in history," but by Mrs. Besant, "not the least of the Master builders of the Universal Religion of the future."

She was a woman of great energy and industry, with a magnificent memory, vivid imagination and an indomitable will—gifts which enabled her, despite frequent illnesses and racking pain, to compile book after book on her special brand of Theosophy.

She was generous to her friends, we are told, although she used them as pawns; vindictive to her enemies—to all who dared openly to discredit her Mahatmas or question her phenomena. On the testimony of her closest friends, Olcott and others, she was untruthful and unguarded in speech and writing, given to ungovernable fits of temper when her language became, not merely unladylike, but positively Billingsgate. Her volcanic temperament ever rebelled against restraint, social and moral.

“Psychic” to a high degree, her personality (not her person) was attractive, magnetic, so that those whose confidence she had won found it hard to shake off her influence, even when they had been disillusioned.

Had she but employed her undoubted gifts of imagination and telling expression in the creation of literary fiction, and not in fantastic frauds, faked phenomena and plagiarized compilations, as her countryman, Solovyoff, had advised, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky might be remembered today with affection by all lovers of literature, and not with contempt by those who know her true history.

Madame Blavatsky had fled Madras before the present writer arrived there, or he would probably have made her acquaintance as he did that of President Olcott and Mrs. Besant. For personal impressions, therefore, he must rely on others.

Mr. Gorn Old, who had also worked with her, writes in the *Occult World*, March, 1914:

Her complexion may be described as coffee coloured, a yellowish brown, and the face had no square inch that was not scored by a thousand wrinkles. This and the white of her eyes, which were not white at all but yellow, gave one the impression of “Liver and the tropics.” . . . The inevitable cigarette called immediate attention to her hands. They were really beautiful hands, but uncanny . . . and every phlange of the lithe, tapering fingers was double-jointed. They seemed to be endowed with a life of their own. They were seldom still for more than a few seconds together. Later on she gave some sort of reason for this. Holding her hands perfectly still over a table, the palms curved so as to form a sort of inverted cup, she remained so for perhaps two minutes or so, when suddenly there was a loud explosion like the crack of a rifle, and one expected to see that the table itself had split from end to end.

Mr. J. R. Bridges, her correspondent for many years, wrote of her in the *Arena*:

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"There was a Titanic display of strength in everything she did. The storms that raged were cyclones. Those exposed to them often felt, with Solovyoff, if there were holy and sage Mahatmas, they could not remain holy and sage and have anything to do with H.P.B. . . . Her mastery of some natures seemed complete."

### THE QUESTION OF MOTIVE

It was natural, but by no means necessary, for Mr. Hodgson, having concluded his investigations into the phenomena and the Blavatsky-Coulomb letters and a batch of K.H. and M. letters, to suggest or attribute to Mme. Blavatsky a motive for her frauds and deceptions. It was at a time when "the Russian Scare" was prominent before the minds of Anglo-Indians. A decade later a belt of casurina trees was pointed out to the writer as having been planted some years before to conceal the shore batteries near the Madras harbor. Not knowing as much of the history of Madame as we know today, Hodgson suggested that H.P.B. was in fact a Russian spy. The Committee of the S.P.R. did not endorse this opinion, nor did the general public in India. She was at most a potential spy, which is quite another thing. Solovyoff, who criticizes Hodgson's accusation, reports a conversation with her at Wurzburg:

Look here. You are soon going to St. Petersburg; now to undertake a very important business of the greatest benefit to Russia. I wish to propose myself as a secret agent of the Russian Government in India. To promote the triumph of my country over those vile English, I am capable of anything. I hate the English Government in India with its missionaries; they are all my personal enemies, thirsting for my destruction. Help me in such a patriotic cause.

Other motives are attributed to H.P.B. by other writers besides love of Theosophy—such as notoriety, power-seeking, vanity, and hatred of Christianity. They were present in varying degrees, no doubt—the last perhaps in greatest proportion.

A member of the Orthodox Christian Church, Madame Blavatsky had traveled in Christian and pagan countries, had come in contact with Latin Christianity on the continent, with Protestantism in England and America, with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism in Africa and India, yet "it seems certain from her writings that Roman Catholicism was the object of her greatest hate, and that English and American Protestantism came only a little way behind it as the objects of her deepest scorn," writes the authors of *Who Wrote the Mahatma Letters?*

<sup>1</sup>*The Occult World*, pp.37-41.

<sup>2</sup>*M.P.I.*, pp.149-50.

<sup>3</sup>*M.P.I.*, p.158.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.146-7.

<sup>5</sup>*M.P.I.*, pp.155-6.

<sup>6</sup>*Proceedings*, Vol. IX 132-3.

<sup>7</sup>*Incidents*, p.301.

<sup>8</sup>*The Secret Doctrine*, chap. XXI, XXII.

<sup>9</sup>*M.P.I.*, App. C.

<sup>10</sup>Sinnett, *The Occult World*, with its "wonderful, suggestive letters."

<sup>11</sup>*Autobiography*, chap. XIV.

## CHAPTER VII

Mme. B's claims to have lived with Mahatmas in Tibet are proved to be fiction. Mme. proved to be the author of the Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett and others.

### THE HABITAT OF THE MAHATMAS

I have lived in different periods in Little and Great Tibet, and these combined periods form more than seven years.

—H. P. Blavatsky, *Light*, August, 1884.

Mme. Blavatsky underwent "a course of studies for a period of seven years in a Himalayan retreat."

—A. P. Sinnett *The Occult World*.

Apart from Mme. Blavatsky's own uncorroborated assertions, the first of which appeared in *Isis Unveiled*, in 1877, all subsequent accounts of her sojourn with Mahatmas in Tibet are secondhand. Sinnett's accounts in *The Occult World* and *Incidents* differ from that of Mrs. Besant in 1907.

H.P.B. says she entered Tibet in 1856, but later said she entered again in 1864. Sinnett says that, warned by "Master," she quitted Tibet before the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny (May, 1857). Mrs. Besant says H.P.B. failed three times to enter the Forbidden Land—in 1848 (when she was only seventeen), in 1853, and in 1855—but that she succeeded in 1864 and again in 1868. The 1864 entry is about eight years later than the *Isis* account for 1856. Thus Madame records one success, which Sinnett repeats, but Mrs. Besant gives two successful entries of Madame into Tibet which are not assigned by her or by her biographer to the years mentioned by Mrs. Besant. But what becomes of Sinnett's "good reason to feel sure she had already been with the Masters in Tibet"?<sup>1</sup> Sinnett says seven years

are quite necessary before any Mahatma secrets are divulged to a chela.<sup>2</sup> Now at the period of her alleged entry into the Forbidden Land the Maharajah allowed no foreigner (feringhi) into Tibet without a Passport signed by a British officer. No such record has been produced in the case of Madame Blavatsky. H.P.B. vaguely mentioned the Kashmir Pass or the Ghobi desert as the abode of the Great White Brotherhood, while Mrs. Besant fixed their habitat somewhere near Shigaste. Now, Rockhill, the American explorer and Tibetan scholar, made enquiry in the neighborhood and at many monasteries, but heard nothing either of Mahatmas or of Madame's visit—indeed he was laughed at by the Lamas for his pains.<sup>3</sup> Sven Hedin, a friend of Mrs. Besant, spent six weeks in the city and neighborhood of Shigaste, and was the honored guest of the Tashi Lama, but he found no trace of Mahatmas.<sup>4</sup> Captain Deasy, who spent three years in exploration in Tibet, had nothing to record of the Great White Brotherhood.<sup>5</sup> Neither had Savage Landor, who painted Tibetan types galore. "As to Mahatmas . . . they are purely imaginary and don't exist."<sup>6</sup> Amundsen,<sup>7</sup> Ferguson,<sup>8</sup> and Waddell,<sup>9</sup> all drew blank.

The latest book which touches Tibet is entitled *In Search of The Mahatmas* by E. G. Schary, published 1937. This daring young man, having studied Hindu and Buddhistic literature in San Francisco, set out almost penniless, but endowed with extraordinary courage, credulity, and endurance, to find the Mahatmas. Unlike Mme. Blavatsky's alleged journeyings in Tibet, Schary's are vouched for by Mr. David Macdonald, who at that time was British trade agent at Gyantze. In *Twenty Years in Tibet* he describes Schary's arrival at the Fort: "A begrimed and filthily clad figure, covered with festering sores, crawled up to the main gate of the Fort. . . . Four months out from Kashmir." But Schary also failed to find Mahatmas.

Before that, some distinguished Hindu scholars had wandered over the Tibetan hills, visiting monasteries, and had brought back

to Calcutta some precious MSS., but like the European travelers, they had nothing to report of Mahatmas.

Strange to relate, it was not in far off Tibet that Mme. Blavatsky met for the first time a Mahatma. Mrs. Besant describes the meeting:

In August, 1851, we find her in London, and there, on a moonlight night, as her diary tells us, beside the Serpentine [in Hyde Park] "I met the Master of my dreams." He then told her that he had chosen her to work in a society, and some time afterwards, with her father's permission, she went into training for her future mission, passing through seven and ten years of probation, trial, and hard work.<sup>10</sup>

After so categorical a statement of fact the reader may be surprised to learn that "the diary" in question is not a diary at all but a book of drawings in which the only entry was the passage about Madame's dream, which could have been entered any time during the previous twelve years. At the alleged meeting by moonlight alone and in Hyde Park at that hour, Madame was twenty years of age. We have had a peep at Madame in training, not with mythical Mahatmas, but with ordinary humans, named, respectively, Metrovich, Mayendorff, and Betanelly. But that the Mahatma myth is still the *pièce de resistance* of Theosophical history is evidenced by the publications of the T.S. in England, on the Continent, and in the United States. Mr. W. Kingsland thinks that "on the general principle of evolution we are bound to accept of their existence . . ."<sup>11</sup>

In 1936 there was published in London a work which surely should disillusion honest Theosophists and convince them that the foundation of the whole Theosophical teaching is a lie. The book is written by two brothers—one was a Theosophist for many years—H. E. and W. L. Hare, and is entitled *Who Wrote The Mahatma Letters?*<sup>12</sup> But not till the publication of *The Mahatma Letters To A. P. Sinnett*, in 1923, and *Letters of H. P. Blavatsky To A. P. Sinnett*, in 1924, and the permission later given to compare with the

printed text the MSS. of the two series, was it possible to *answer* once and for all the question: Who wrote the Mahatma letters? *The Mahatma Letters* number 130, and run to 500 pages. The authors studied all available sources, including the letters, diaries, and notes of H.P.B. while in America (1875-9), which were published in *The Theosophist*, at Adyar, between 1923-5: *Isis Unveiled* (1877); the letters of H.P.B. in Appx. of *The Mahatma Letters*; and, of course, *The Letters of H.P.B. to Sinnett*; for all these are believed by Theosophists to be the genuine Blavatsky writings. The authors were not permitted to photograph any of the MSS. It should surprise Theosophists to learn that only seven, or parts of seven, of *The Mahatma Letters* formed the basis of Sinnett's "astonishing disclosures" of occult science in *The Occult World*, and that only two of the sixteen *Mahatma Letters* on which his *Esoteric Buddhism* is based, are quoted literally. In 1881 Sinnett called the suggestion that H.P.B. might be the author of *The Mahatma Letters* a mere absurdity," and stated definitely: "She certainly is not the producer of their handwriting."<sup>13</sup>

Having carefully scrutinized the original manuscripts, the authors sum up and formulate their conclusions, which in substance agree with Hodgson's—that the Mahatma letters were written by Madame H. P. Blavatsky, but a few by her Hindu secretary and associates. Like Hodgson, but on a larger scale, they found much evidence of bad English and French constructions and American colloquialisms, such as would not be expected in the writings of two Asiatic sages. Why, they ask, do these omniscient Mahatmas write from Tibet to an Englishman in India "in the thought-basis of Paris and the street locution of New York. . . . They do not scruple to falsify veritable documents in pursuit of an eclectic propaganda." Unable to deny the resemblance of her style and language to those of the Mahatmas, Madame boldly affirmed that she learned her English from them in Tibet.<sup>14</sup> (See *Blavatsky Letters* p.479.) But we know she had an English governess in Russia, and traveled and

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## THE STORY OF A GREAT ANTI-CHRISTIAN FRAUD

lived in England and America long before she dreamed her dream of Mahatmas. On page 248 the authors give a slightly reduced facsimile of a letter "in the undoubted K.H. hand, believed to have been addressed about April 6, 1885, to Dr. Franz Hartmann" who was at the time in partial control of the Theosophical Headquarters at Adyar. We fear the authors have gone astray on this point, because H.P.B. and Olcott left Bombay for Europe by mail steamer on February 21, 1884, and Dr. Hartmann did not reach Adyar from America till February 29, 1884. The letter in question was produced by Damodar (H.P.B.'s Hindu secretary) at a committee meeting at Adyar on March 22, 1884. H.P.B. and Olcott returned from Europe to Adyar, December 20, 1884, and H.P.B., accompanied by Dr. Hartmann as medical adviser, left Madras by steamer on April 2, 1885. The fact that the letter in question is "exceptionally firm and clear, is correct in grammar, spelling, and punctuation" inclines us to the belief with Hodgson, who, we think, saw this letter at Adyar, that it was written by Damodar, who was well acquainted with the Mahatma peculiarity in crossing his *t's* with a long stroke and overlining all his *m's*, a Russian mannerism, according to Mr. Bechhofer Roberts, of Russians writing in French or English. As the translator of five Russian plays and the author of books on Russia, we accept his judgment.

As in the Gospel drama the denier's tongue belied the truth of his words, so in the "Theosophical Evangel" the deceiver's pen unwittingly discovers her deceit.

Either the Masters exist, and H.P.B. was their messenger; or she was utterly fraudulent. . . . In the latter case the sooner the whole movement disintegrates the better; its dead corpse cannot be destroyed too soon.

So wrote *Dawn*, November, 1924, the official organ of the Royal Lodge of the T.S. in Sydney. The Hare brothers should find satisfaction in the fact that they have by their painstaking investigations proved the first alternative to be false, and the second so true

that it only remains for their work to be read by truth-loving Theosophists for these to decide to renounce a cult which <sup>was</sup> founded on fraud and propagated by fiction.

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<sup>1</sup>*Incidents*, p.157.

<sup>2</sup>*The Occult World*, p.7.

<sup>3</sup>See *The Land of the Lamas and Discoveries and Adventures in Tibet* (1881, 1903).

<sup>4</sup>*Trans-Himalaya* (1910).

<sup>5</sup>*In Tibet and Chinese Turkestan* (1903).

<sup>6</sup>*Tibet and Nepal* (1905).

<sup>7</sup>*In The Land of The Lamas* (1901).

<sup>8</sup>*Sports and Travel in Betan and The Steppes* (1911).

<sup>9</sup>*L'Ase and Its Mysteries* (1905).

<sup>10</sup>*H. P. Blavatsky and The Masters of Wisdom* (1907).

<sup>11</sup>*The Real H. P. Blavatsky*, p.303 (1927).

<sup>12</sup>p.326, Demy 8 vo.

<sup>13</sup>*The Occult World*, pp.99-100.

<sup>14</sup>*Blavatsky Letters*, p.479.

## CHAPTER VIII

How Olcott, Judge, and Mrs. Besant fought for the post of President; Judge and Mrs. Besant angling to oust Olcott from his nominal position as President; how Judge forged Mahatma letters and accused Mrs. Besant of doing likewise; how the council of the Theosophical Society refusing to publish the documents and counter charges (Mrs. Besant had carefully burned the originals), a member publishes his copy, thus revealing an unsavory scandal; how Judge founded the Universal Brotherhood of the Theosophical Society in America which, under Mrs. Katherine Tingley, established itself at Point Loma.

### A FIGHT FOR THE PRESIDENCY (T.S.)

At the time of Mme. Blavatsky's death in London, May 8, 1891, Olcott was lecturing in Australia; Judge had been presiding at the American T.S. Convention; and Mrs. Besant was at sea, returning from the Convention. On receiving the cablegram announcing H.P.B.'s death, Judge, the vice-President, wired: "Do nothing till I come." On his arrival he immediately took possession of H.P.B.'s keys and correspondence, and in a few days produced messages purporting to have come directly to him from Mme. Blavatsky's alleged Master. When Mrs. Besant arrived, she produced an Order written by Mme. Blavatsky when in the flesh appointing her head of the Esoteric Section. Judge suggested they should share the responsibilities: he in America, and she in Europe, but first he would like to consult the Master. After a few hours he showed his query, and written across it was: "yes, Judge's plan is right." Later Mrs. Besant found among her papers a slip written in the well-known

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red pencil used by the Mahatma and stamped with his monogram *M*. Soon Mahatma letters began to be found in various places, having for general subject Judge's fitness for the Society's highest office. Mrs. Besant was elated. Was not this a stronger proof of the existence of the Master? H.P.B. is dead, yet letters from her Master arrive; the same peculiar paper, pencil, writing, and seal.

In August, 1891, a farewell meeting was organized by her old friends. Doubting freethinkers as of old, and her new friends, the Theosophists, awaited her speech with different emotions. She would justify her new-found faith:

You have known me in this Hall for sixteen years. You have never known me to tell a lie. I tell you that since Madame Blavatsky left, I have had letters in the same handwriting as the letters which she received. . . . You are surprised. . . . All the evidence I had of the existence of Madame Blavatsky's Teachers of the so-called abnormal powers came through her. It is not so now. . . . I have exactly the same certainty for the truth of the statements I have made, as I know that you are here. I refuse to be false to the knowledge of my intellect and the perceptions of my reasoning faculties.<sup>1</sup>

If we remember aright, it was the perception of her reasoning faculties which had led Mrs. Annie Besant of old to abandon Christianity for Atheism, and now Atheism for Theosophy, each in turn labeled Truth.

Reviewing her Autobiography in *The Nineteenth Century* (September, 1894), Mr. Gladstone, freed from the premiership, wrote:

The book shows with how much at least of intellectual ease, and that unquestioning assumption of being right, vast spaces of mental traveling may be performed. Mrs. Besant passes from her earliest to her latest stage of thought as lightly as the swallow skims the surface of the lawn and with just as little effort to ascertain what lies beneath. . . . In the general absence of argument to explain

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the causes of her movements, she apparently thinks it sufficient to supply us with her three portraits as carrying with them sufficient attestation. . . .

Olcott and Judge, the President and the vice-President, two wide-awake Americans, angled for position and played "with the recklessness of mining camp poker." In *Isis Very Much Unveiled* is the facsimile of a Mahatma letter which Judge slipped into a letter addressed to Olcott assuring him that Judge is not a forger and that the Mahatma's seal is safe with him in Tibet. A learned Brahman, who, with Mrs. Besant, represented Theosophy at the World Fair at Chicago and who became her *guru* (teacher) in India, laid before her "conclusive evidence" that Judge forged Mahatma letters. Olcott at Adyar, was not surprised. Had he not bought the peculiar rice paper and given the *M* seal to Mme. Blavatsky in Kashmir? But when Hodgson was investigating the K.H. letters, the President gave him no help in this matter. Backed by the Indian Theosophists, Olcott sent Mrs. Besant's accusing letter to Judge, and suggested that he should either resign by cable or stand his trial at the London Convention in July, 1894. Judge denied the charges. At the Convention he at once challenged the jurisdiction of the committee on the ground that even had he been guilty the offence would have been committed in his private capacity, not as vice-President. The Council of the T.S. upheld his plea. Then Mrs. Besant expressed her view in a speech which puts Portia in the shade.

. . . I believe he has sometimes received messages for other people . . . but not by direct writing by the Master, nor by His direct precipitation; and that Mr. Judge has then believed himself justified in writing down in the script adopted by H.P.B. for communication from the Master the message psychically received, and in giving it to the person for whom it was intended, leaving that person to wrongly assume that it was a direct precipitation or writing by the Master Himself. . . .

When I said that I had received, after H. P. Blavatsky's

death, letters in the writing H.P.B. had been accused of forging, I referred to letters given me by Mr. Judge, and as they were in the well-known script, I never dreamed of challenging their source. I now know that they were not written or precipitated by the Masters, and that they were done by Mr. Judge . . . but I also believe the gist of these messages was psychically received, and that Mr. Judge's error lay in giving them to me in a script written by himself. . . .<sup>2</sup>

This defense of forgery—if one may apply the term to non-existent Mahatmas—pleased the Committee, anxious to keep the Society together. But Judge was not satisfied; neither were some of the T.S. officials. Judge issued a manifesto declaring Mrs. Besant's headship of the Esoteric Section at an end, for she had tried psychic experiments on him and had, in league with one Chakavarti (her Brahman guru), flooded the Society with spurious documents from phantasmal Mahatmas and Black Magicians.

When Mr. Gorn Old, one of the London officials, urged the publication of all the evidence, as promised the Indian Theosophists, he was informed that Mrs. Besant had burned all the documents. She had in fact but followed Judge's example in burning the Shrine at Adyar in order to destroy the evidence of fraud. But, unfortunately for her reputation, copies had been taken, which, on their being refused for publication by the London T.S. authorities, Mr. Old handed to Mr. Edmund Garrett, who published them and the disgraceful story in the *Westminster Gazette*, October and November, 1894. Had he not done so we would have heard as little of this matter as we would have heard of the Leadbeater-Besant letters had not Mrs. Besant blundered in that matter also. Later the articles were published in book form. A copy is now very difficult to procure. Judge could not stand the exposure. Backed by a majority of American Theosophists, he formed The Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society, which, after his death within a year, split, a large section following Mrs. Katherine Tingley, who finally settled

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down at Point Loma, California, where the Society is rich and flourishing. During the Convention at Adyar, December, 1912, Mrs. Besant referred to the "Sister Society" thus:

The tireless malignity which has its center at Point Loma has been exceptionally active, and has deluged the country with articles so unclean and so mendacious that one stands amazed at the spectacle. As you know, I have uttered no word against Mrs. Tingley, the leader of Point Loma, during the seven years of her ceaseless attacks.

And Christians are invited by Mrs. Besant to join the T.S. and become "better Christians"!

Neither Olcott nor Mrs. Besant ever attempted to refute any of the statements in the *Westminster Gazette*, an eloquent comment on Theosophical tactics.

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<sup>1</sup>Garrett, *Isis Very Much Unveiled*.

<sup>2</sup>*Isis Very Much Unveiled*, chap. V.

## CHAPTER IX

The Theosophical Society in Europe and India, under the presidency of Mrs. Besant, captured the English branch of the Old Catholic Church (Janzenist) for Theosophy; how Leadbeater became tutor to Krishnamurti, the confidant of Mrs. Besant; and what happened in consequence. How Krishnamurti, the subject of several law suits, after years of training, finally dissolved the branch society which Mrs. Besant founded to prepare the world for his Messiahship.

### THE KRISHNAMURTI CHURCH IN THE MAKING

What more appropriate than to provide his protégé with an official religious organization all in proper running order, awaiting the moment when the spirit of the Lord Christ should descend into Krishnamurti's body and begin his mission on this earth.

—G. M. Williams, *The Passionate Pilgrim*.<sup>1</sup>

On the death of Colonel Oleott at Adyar, in 1907, Mrs. Besant was elected President of the T.S., a position she held till her death in September, 1933, at the age of eighty-six.

In 1883 Mme. Blavatsky had set up the Esoteric Section "for the deeper study of Esoteric Philosophy." An Inner Circle was "intended for those only who were willing to go further and go faster." As Mrs. Besant's astral Svengali, Mr. C. W. Leadbeater, went faster and further than others in his occult studies, we must give him space.

The Reverend Charles W. Leadbeater (C.W.L.), an Anglican Curate, renounced Christianity, and went out to Adyar, Madras, with Mme. Blavatsky in 1884. For five years he lectured on The-

osophy and taught boys in Ceylon. Mr. A. P. Sinnett, editor of the *Pioneer*, in Allahabad, who had joined the T.S. and had been dismissed from the *Pioneer*, engaged Leadbeater as tutor for his son and medium for himself in London, since, having fallen out with H.P.B., she promptly cut his Mahatmic communications. Leadbeater stipulated that his protégé, a Hindu boy named Jinarajadasa, should remain with him, as the Masters had entrusted the lad to his care. Soon the London T.S. Lodge were rejoicing in having been brought into touch with the Masters through Leadbeater. Mrs. Besant now invited Leadbeater to join her band of chelas in Avenue Road, St. John's Wood, where they both were soon deep in occultism. Under his guidance she wrote *Esoteric Christianity* in 1901, and in 1903 she published *The Christian Creed* in such a guise as to be recognizable neither by friend or foe. Together they read the Etheric Record of past ages, wherein he discovered that Jesus and Christ are two distinct persons; that the Apostles never lived; that the Gospels are unauthentic, and much besides.<sup>2</sup>

Henceforth as an Astral Svengali, writes G. M. Williams, he guided his Trilby and gave her assurance for her adventures among the astral plains. With little Janara he would accompany her on lecture tours and while she electrified her audience by her undisputed eloquence, he, in an adjoining room, was said to pour "prana," or mystic reserves of psychic power, into his Trilby. But it was Leadbeater's studies in *Thought-Forms* which later brought him disgrace. The story is too long and too sordid to be told in detail, but in view of the fact that Leadbeater was later the chief conspirator in the plot to capture the Old Catholic Church movement in England with its valid Orders for the Liberal Catholic Church in preparation for the New Messiah in the person of Judd Krishnamurti, and had himself consecrated bishop to that end, a brief outline is necessary and should be known to the clergy of every creed.

The first occasion was when C.W.L. was training the sons of Theosophists in the United States in 1904-5. Foreseeing a storm,

he scurried back to Benares to forestall and "explain" to A. B. when the formulated charges should arrive from the outraged parents. The charges were that he was teaching young boys "demoralizing personal practices." Detailed evidences of the boys were given and the charges signed by Mrs. Dennis, mother of one of the boys, who was also Corresponding Secretary of the Esoteric Section of the T.S.; by Fullerton, the Genl. Sec.; by Knothe, the Asst. Genl. Sec.; and by Elizabeth M. Chidester, Asst. Corr. Sec. of the Esoteric Section in America.

At the Enquiry held in London, on May 16, 1906, Leadbeater based his defence on his power to see the astral thought-forms of his pupils; but the Committee, composed of American, French, and British Theosophists, would accept neither his explanation nor his immoral remedy. Foreseeing his condemnation, Olcott, the President of the T.S., who had come from India, dictated beforehand a letter of resignation, which, on behalf of Leadbeater, he would produce at an opportune moment "in order to save the Society from embarrassment." Meanwhile Mrs. Besant, in Benares, had written to Mrs. Dennis: "I know Mr. Leadbeater to be a disciple of the Master K.H. . . . I know that if he were evil-minded this could not be. I cannot therefore join in hounding him out of the T.S. . . ." But when the stenographic Report of the Committee of Enquiry reached her, and her Svengali was not at hand to "explain," Mrs. Besant believed she had been the victim of "glamour" (i.e. illusion, or Black Magic, like Mrs. Eddy's "malicious animal magnetism"), when she was with Leadbeater. Thus she wrote to Fullerton in July, 1906:

He denied none of the charges, but in answer to questions he very much strengthened them. . . . Let me here place on record that such teaching as this given to men, let alone to innocent boys, is worthy of the sternest reprobation. . . .

Despite this, there were frequent intimate exchanges of letters and cablegrams between C.W.L. and A.B. In September he con-

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cludes a letter: "If I can be of use by standing by your side again, you may count upon me as already there." Immediately on succeeding Colonel Olcott as President of the T.S. in 1907, Mrs. Besant began to engineer the return of her "dear Brother Charles Leadbeater" to the Society. In *The Theosophist*, January, 1909, she was able to announce his return "to his place in the Society"—his place and duty being that "of discovering and training hopeful young members of the T.S., in which work he had found great mischief resulted from suppressed thoughts and desires." Leadbeater went out to Adyar, Madras, where he taught Theosophy and wrote and read the Etheric records till another scandal arose. The occult investigations of the *twain* in 1910 were published in 1913 as *Man: Whence, How, Whither?* which was intended to pave the way for the coming of the World Teacher in the person of young Krishnamurti, the son of a Hindu secretary at Adyar and a pupil of C.W.L. Of the initiation ceremony of this boy of fifteen A.B. wrote:

Here [at Adyar] last January [1911], carefully guarded, lay the empty body of the young disciple taken away to Tibet for his mystic initiation, and hither the new *initiate* returned to take up again his dwelling therein, to live under the guardianship of his elder brethren until the time is ripe for the ending of his trust.

Becoming suspicious of Leadbeater's conduct, the father of Krishna and his brother brought an action against Mrs. Annie Besant to terminate her guardianship of his boys. On the witness stand Mrs. Besant stated, *inter alia*, that Krishna had been associated with Mr. Leadbeater in many previous lives; that she had said that Krishna's body will be used by the Lord Maityra; that the Lord Maityra and Christ are one; that the body of Krishna will be used some time hence by the Lord Maityra. In giving judgement Mr. Justice Bakewell said:

Mr. Leadbeater admitted in his evidence that he had held, and even now holds, opinions which I need only describe as certainly immoral, and such as to unfit him to be

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the tutor of the boys, and taken in conjunction with his professed power to detect the approach of impure thoughts, render him a highly dangerous associate for children. . . . I direct the defendant to hand over the custody of the two boys to the plaintiff on or before the 29th of May, 1913. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Mrs. Besant finally appealed to the Privy Council, which *upset* the Judge's ruling on a technical point of jurisdiction—the boys were in England at the time—and she remained their guardian. It was nine years before Krishnamurti returned to India.

After the exposure in the Alcyone Case, as it was called, Lead-beater thought it advisable to quit India, and in Australia began to train boys in the way they should walk on the astral plain.

THE OLD CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

To narrate in detail how this evil genius schemed, in conjunction with others, to receive valid Orders would require much space. As the Liberal Catholic Church (L.C.C.) derives its Orders from the Old Catholic Church (O.C.C.), a few words about the latter and its introduction into England are necessary.

When the definition of papal infallibility was proclaimed at the Vatican Council in July, 1870, Dr. Dollinger with Professors at Munich, Freiburg, and other teaching centers, protested against the doctrine, and formed themselves into a separate body. They and their deluded followers were excommunicated by the Holy See. The German episcopate published the Decree of the Council in a joint Pastoral in August, 1870. Having priests but no bishops, the anti-papalists, now calling themselves the Old Catholics, got the Jansenist Archbishop of Utrecht to consecrate Professor Reinkens as Old Catholic Bishop of Haarlem in August, 1873. The Prussian Government voted him a stipend of £2,400. He in turn consecrated Gerardus Gul as Archbishop of Utrecht, in 1892.

"It had been thought that some Roman Catholic congregations in Great Britain were proposing to the Old Catholics, and on these

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grounds the consecration of Bishop Mathew took place. No such exodus the Roman Catholics did follow," writes Wedgwood.

In 1908, "a clerical megalomaniac," named Arnold Harris Mathew, who claimed to be *de jure* Earl of Llandaff of Thomastown<sup>4</sup> and had been ordained a Catholic priest, got himself consecrated by the Jansenist Archbishop Gul.

During four years and four months Mathew consecrated no fewer than eight bishops: "His bishops left him and submitted to other Churches as readily as did his priests."

In 1910, Bishop Mathew broke off relations with the Dutch Old Catholics and declared the O.C.C. in England to be an autonomous and independent body. Bishop Mathew was excommunicated by the Holy See in 1911, and on the *Times* publishing the sentence, he brought an action for libel, which failed.

On hearing Mrs. Besant lecture on Theosophy at York in 1911, Mr. J. I. Wedgwood, student for Anglican Orders, became General Secretary to the T.S. in England. In 1913 he got in touch with Bishop Mathew, who ordained him priest of the O.C.C. on July 22nd. "As some indication of one's belief I sent him (the bishop) a copy of Mrs. Besant's *Theosophy*," writes Wedgwood.

In 1914 three other ex-Anglican students, Gauntlett, Farrer, and King, who were Theosophists, were ordained by Mathew, having first signed a profession of faith in the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Orthodox Church; in the Seven Sacraments; in the dogma of Transubstantiation, and the other Roman Catholic doctrines. Doubtless they interpreted their solemn oath "esoterically."<sup>5</sup>

At the same time an ex-Anglican curate named Willoughby was ordained priest by Mathew (August 1, 1914). In September Mathew stated that it was desirable that:

Immediate steps should be taken to preserve the valid episcopal succession in our portion of the Church from

risk of loss. As you know, three of the Bishops who received consecration for the express purpose of holding the succession as a precious trust for our work have submitted to the Holy See. . . .

Willoughby received ten and Wedgwood six votes. Willoughby was consecrated by Mathew at the Bull Inn, Bromley, Kent, on October 28, 1914.

In the autumn Wedgwood went out to Adyar, Madras, "on the invitation of Mrs. Besant," and the following year visited Leadbeater in Sydney.

In May, 1915, Mathew, having been furnished with full details of Willoughby's expulsion from the Anglican Church, promptly expelled him from the O.C.C. Then "we had all been requested to abjure our theosophical tenets," says Wedgwood. Willoughby, after his expulsion, consecrated the Theosophists King and Gauntlet bishops on September 26, 1915. Wedgwood, on his return from consultations with Leadbeater, approached "four of those who had been consecrated by Archbishop Mathew, also a certain Bishop Vernon Herford" to consecrate him, "but without success." Finally he turned to the discarded Willoughby, who obligingly raised him to episcopal rank, February 13, 1916, as first Presiding Bishop of the Liberal Catholic Church in England.

"A few months later I was on my way to Sydney to take counsel with C. W. Leadbeater. . . . He was consecrated bishop (by Wedgwood) on July 15, 1916, having previously received conditional baptism and confirmation and the earlier Orders, again conditionally, at my hands," writes Wedgwood. "Having obtained the succession, he hastens off to Australia and passes it on to Bishop Leadbeater, whose reputation is as unsavory as that of Willoughby," writes *Truth*, July 14, 1920. Leadbeater was then sixty-nine and in a hurry to prepare a brand new Church for the new Christ, his pupil Krishnamurti.

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Thus was the plot hatched at Sydney and Adyar completed to capture the O.C.C. for Theosophy and the L.C.C. Three months after Leadbeater's consecration, Mrs. Besant wrote in *The Theosophist* (October, 1916) :

There is slowly growing up in Europe, silently but steadily, with its strongest center perhaps in Holland, but with members scattered in other European countries, the little known movement called the Old Catholic Church, with the ancient ritual, with unchallenged Orders, yet holding itself aloof from the Papal Obedience. . . . It is likely to become the future Church of Christendom "when He comes."

The "ancient ritual" was being carefully studied in Sydney by their Lordships, Leadbeater and Wedgwood, who set to work to "eliminate references to fear of God, to His wrath and to everlasting damnation, to constant insistence on the sinfulness and worthlessness of man, and to frequent appeals for mercy."<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile Bishop Mathew had offered to join Rome or Canterbury. Although on January 8, 1916, we find his Lordship stating in the *Tablet*: "I make no claim to be recognized as a Bishop. . . . I desire to conform in everything to whatever may be the commands or wishes of the Holy See. . . . It is my firm resolve to obey the commands of the Holy Father." This extraordinary man, on April 19, consecrated a Mr. Williams to be Bishop of "the Western Uniate Catholic Church"; and on July 2 sent a Mr. McFall, with episcopal regalia, to evangelize the Irish.

"There is no existing Catholic communion, or Church, in which the blend of theosophical mysticism and Catholic sacramentalism, which is the Liberal Catholic religion, could find a home," writes F. W. Piggot, the present Regionary Bishop for Great Britain and Ireland:

Liberal Catholics base their theological structure on certain age-long spiritual processes, the teaching of which they claim is concealed within both Scriptures and Creeds.

We offer to the world Pan-enteism, Evolution-re. births, Elder Brothers.

To the Catholics of the L.C.C. type—redemption is naturally bound up with the process of evolution, and is a continuous process. The L.C.C. is probably the only Christian Church in which reincarnation is openly taught.

The doctrine of the identity of God with the highest self in each is not distinctly taught so far as we are aware, in any other Church.

The difference between Christ and His less evolved brethren is a difference of degree, not of kind. Our Lord has not yet reached the end of evolution. The Liberal Catholics do not see any need for reconciliation, or atonement, in the sense in which that need is stressed by Catholics and Protestants alike. Miracles such as the Virgin Birth and the Empty Tomb are, in the view of Liberal Catholics, of no doctrinal value., etc., etc.

On the Sacraments we have the following:

The L.C.C. recognizes seven sacraments. Auricular confession is entirely optional and is not necessary for the reception of the Eucharist. Most Churches teach that forgiveness of sins is in some way a supernatural process, but the truth is, this is not so.

Wedgwood's investigations into the Doctrine of Intention—

Shows quite clearly that the intention to do what the Church intends to be done suffices, and the idiosyncrasies of personal belief (as in the case of the Reformers) do not seriously intervene in the question of Orders.

Nevertheless, while the L.C.C. finds no adequate reason to deny the validity of Anglican Orders, it insists on conditional ordination, proceeded by conditional baptism and confirmation of candidates from the Anglican ministry, in order to safeguard the position of the L.C.C. with other Apostolic bodies who do not recognize Anglican Orders.

In May, 1919, Mrs. Besant returned to England to be con-

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fronted with "a scandal more serious than those she had had to face in the past."

Of the six Liberal Catholic priests in London, four were in difficulties with the police on charges of sexual perversion. They had been mixed up in a raid on a notorious Piccadilly restaurant. One of them had made a confession not only involving the other three, but also "Bishop" Wedgwood, who was at the time with Leadbeater in Australia. . . . Gauntlett, one of the priests not involved, was about to resign. . . .<sup>8</sup>

By Martyn, Head of the Esoteric Section of Australia, who was in London, Mrs. Besant sent a message demanding Wedgwood's resignation.

Wedgwood retired till the clouds should roll by; and, "on a beautiful estate in Holland donated by a Dutch widow, he established headquarters of the Liberal Catholic Church, surrounded with young priests and curates."<sup>9</sup> On her visit to Australia in 1922, she failed to soothe the anger of Martyn and his 800 Theosophists, who had meanwhile brought grave charges against Bishop Leadbeater in regard to boys in his charge. In consequence the police began to investigate, but the outraged opposition would not bring the boys into court against their aged tutor because of the resulting stigma in after life. The Inspector General stated that sufficient evidence had been discovered to justify Leadbeater's being kept under observation, and the Head of the Criminal Investigation Department reported: "I am of opinion that there are good grounds for believing him to be a sex pervert."<sup>10</sup>

*Truth* (London) published scathing articles, called Leadbeater "a horrible old beast," and advised the Theosophists to drop the "bunch of bastard bishops" overboard. In a Preface to Mr. Stanley Morrison's little book, *Some Fruits of Theosophy*, published in 1919, Father Thurston S.J., wrote: . . . "it is impossible to contemplate without indignation this masquerading of holy things by characters

of evil life." Unfortunately the characters of such characters had <sup>not</sup> altered in the intervening sixteen years.

Asked by an interviewer, in 1917: "Is it your opinion that the Old Catholic Church movement will be used by the World Teacher as the nucleus of His new religion?" Leadbeater answered: "At any rate, it is there for him if He wishes to use it. At least <sup>this</sup> branch [of the Catholic Church] will know Him and work for Him, putting itself wholly into His hands as an instrument to be used at His will."<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile Leadbeater and Wedgwood were busy making bishops. The former had consecrated six, and the latter seven, in preparation for His coming, before Krishnamurti kicked over the traces in 1929.

Of the eight consecrated by Leadbeater (who died in 1934) seven are active and one has resigned. Of Wedgwood's eight (up to 1935) four have died. From the Table of Apostolic Succession, printed in 1935, one gathers that there were then at least thirteen bishops in the L.C. Church, four of them in U.S.A.

At the Camp meeting, held at Ommen, Holland, in 1925, on an estate given the prospective Messiah by a Dutch Baron, Mrs. Besant announced "by Order of the Master," that the coming of the World Teacher being imminent, three movements would be launched, one of which would be the World Religion. At the Camp meeting the following year Mrs. Besant, "by Order of the King whom I serve" (not George V), announced the names of seven of the twelve Apostles who would preach the New Gospel.

Krishnamurti, who had traveled the world over with his guardian and had repeatedly heard her announce him as the coming Messiah, once again remained silent on that subject; but in May, 1929, at the annual Camp at Ojai, California, he seemed suddenly to have come to the use of reason, for he said:

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To those of you who are Star members, and to my friends who are Theosophists it is all apparently very difficult. It is difficult because you have in your minds very clearly defined who I am. You have been told who I am, and you have been told what the manner of my teaching will be, in what way I shall work, who are my particular disciples, which movements shall be worked foremost. All these are barriers to undertaking the Truth.

Strange language surely from the Head of the Order. Three months later, and once again Ommen spread its tents for 2,500 members of the Star to hear their beloved Head. His printed address entitled *Dissolution of the Order of the Star* by J. Krishnamurti (Ommen, August 3, 1929), is before us. It was delivered after "two years of earnest thought." He does not want followers; "I mean this. . . . Truth is in everybody." He himself is "the whole truth that is eternal. . . . I have decided to disband the Order as I happen to be its Head. You can form other organizations and expect someone else. Why have false, hypocritical people followed me, the embodiment of truth?" Cold comfort for his deluded followers! Annie Besant, then aged eighty-two, who had fought in court after court, for the custody of this Brahman's body, who had exhibited him throughout the civilized world as the coming World Teacher, the Lord Maitrya, the Lord Christ, made known to her and Leadbeater by the Masters of Wisdom, the elusive Mahatmas, what thought had she as she sat listening intently to the repudiation of all her alleged Mahatma inspired plans? Eighteen years of ceaseless planning, plotting, organizing, lecturing, writing, and for what?

The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men  
Gang aft a-gley,  
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain  
For promis'd joy.

Well, the aged Astral Svangali, Leadbeater, and his Trilby, Annie Besant, have both gone to their account, or their *Karma*, after

half a century of futile plotting against the Faith of their fathers.  
They have left behind them in the organization of the Liberal Cath-  
olic Church, with which Krishnamurti to his credit will have nothing  
to do, what Catholics can regard as nothing less than—to quote  
Father Thurston—"a blasphemous parody of all that the Church  
holds most sacred."

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<sup>1</sup> *A Biography of Annie Besant*, G. M. Williams (1932).

<sup>2</sup> See *The Inner Life* and *The Christian Creed*.

<sup>3</sup> *The Alcyone Case: G. Narayanan V Annie Besant*, pp.248-264.

NOTE: A full report of this case "certified to be a true copy" by G. White, Second Assistant Registrar, Madras High Court, and dated April 13, 1913, was published by Goodwin and Co., Madras. The correspondence between A.B. and C.W.L. would never have reached the public had it not been that in mistake Mrs. Besant handed to the Prosecution a bundle of letters of which full and damning use was made during the trial. Our quotations are from *The Alcyone Case* and its exhibits.

<sup>4</sup> Interesting and astonishing details of the career of Mathew will be found in *Some Fruits of Theosophy* (1919) by Stanley Morrison.

<sup>5</sup> See *Truth* (April 14, 1920), "The Mantle of Archbishop Mathew"; (June 9, 1920), "Bastard Bishops"; (July 14, 1920), "The Old Catholic Bifurcation."

<sup>6</sup> *The Liberal Catholic Magazine*, p.78 (1938). "The whole thing seems to be nothing more than a particular obnoxious humbug, resulting in the foundation of a bastard church by a bevy of illegitimate bishops (*Truth*, June 9, 1920)."

<sup>7</sup> See *The Liberal Catholic Magazine* (February, March, and April, 1938); and *The Parting of the Ways*, F. W. Piggot (1925).

<sup>8</sup> See *The Passionate Pilgrim*, XXV, 320-327.

<sup>9</sup> *The Passionate Pilgrim*, p.323.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.326.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in *Some Fruits of Theosophy*, pp.49-59, from *Theosophy* in Australia.

## CHAPTER X

In this final chapter the Pantheistic doctrines of Theosophy-Karma and transmigration of souls are explained and extracts are given from a correspondence between Cardinal Newman and Professor Rhys Davids, the foremost spokesmen of their day for Christianity and Buddhism. Proof is given to show that Christianity is in no way beholden to Buddhism for any part of its doctrine or ritual.

### THEOSOPHY AND CHRISTIANITY

Strong and persistent attempts are being made to introduce into Europe the doctrine of rebirth or transmigration of souls. This doctrine is bound up with that of relentless retribution, or the so-called Law of Karma.

—Dr. J. P. Arendzen.

Every Christian teacher and minister ought to inform himself of the true nature of the poisonous anti-Christian system; for attempts are being made in many places to introduce it [Theosophy] into the Church (Protestant).

—Dr. J. M. Farquhar.

The chief doctrines which the pantheistic compound called Theosophy has to offer the Christian in exchange for the doctrines of Christ and His Church, will be the subject of this final chapter.

These doctrines are: the identity of God and man; Karma and Transmigration of souls. At bottom they are but clumsy adaptations of Buddhistic and Hindu tenets, transformed in such wise as to be generally unacceptable either to orthodox Buddhists or to Hindus.

Mrs. Besant states that the secondary teachings of Theosophy are such as are common to all religions, living or dead, to wit: the unity of God, the triplexity of His nature, the descent of the Spirit into matter, and hence the hierarchies of in-

telligencies whereof humanity is one; the growth of humanity by the unfolding of consciousness and the evolution of bodies, *i.e.*, Reincarnation; the progress of this growth under inviolable law, the law of causality, *i.e.*, Karma; the environment of this growth, the three worlds—physical, astral, and mental, or earth—the intermediary world, and heaven; the existence of Divine Teachers, superhuman men.<sup>1</sup>

Again Mrs. Besant writes that the community of religious teachings in all the world's religion,

arose from a Brotherhood of Divine Men, which sent out one of its members into the world from time to time to found a new religion, containing the same essential verities as its predecessors, but varying in form with the needs of the time, and with the capacities of the people to whom the Message was sent.<sup>2</sup>

Further, she tells us that "the nature of God and man are identical."<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Besant, it is well known, was a clever juggler of words. But where on earth, one may ask, dwell those savage tribes, unknown to anthropologists, who believe the doctrines indicated by Mrs. Besant? Where are these Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan communities who believe in and teach Pantheism, Reincarnation, and Karma? Where dwell Jews, Parsees, and Moslems who believe in and teach the triple nature of God, or deny His Personal nature? Sinnett assures us that "no such conception as that of a Personal God enters into the Great Esoteric Doctrine of nature."<sup>4</sup> Mme. Blavatsky speaks for Theosophists: "We reject the notion of a Personal God—the God of Theology is a bundle of contradictions."<sup>5</sup> Mr. W. Kingsland believes that "the idea of a Personal God is too anthropomorphic to be entertained by any rational man today."<sup>6</sup> Much of this Theosophist writing is as unbalanced and exaggerated as that of Mme. Blavatsky. Leadbeater, clairvoyantly reading the Etheric Record, discovered that we "are evolving fragments of His life."—(the *Solar Deity*); that the head of the Department of Religion is a Great Official who "either comes Himself or sends one of

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His pupils to found a new religion when needed"; that the Great White Brotherhood is an august body of Adepts, who, having finished their training, generously remain on earth to help humanity on the road of evolution"; that a few of these Masters take apprentices—"one such was Madame Blavatsky, who had resolved to devote herself to the service of mankind"; that the Etheric doctrine is still kept alive in our midst by the Masters, and their teaching expounded anew by chosen souls like Sinnett through H.P.B. and A.B. through C.W.L. himself.<sup>7</sup> Leadbeater occultly discovered that Jesus was born a century earlier than history, Jewish and Christian, relates. For these occult "finds" Sinnett tells us proof cannot be given "by any process of reason." Of course many of these alleged occult sources are in reality but accommodated copies of esoteric teaching brought as charges by Gnostic heretics against the early Christian Church, and have been refuted by Irenaeus, whom Tertullian, his contemporary, styles "the most diligent searcher of all doctrines."

There is little doubt that although the term *Disciplina arcana* (Discipline of the Secret) came into prominence in the controversies of the seventeenth century, the *custom* which the term indicated was itself very ancient. It was an observance introduced towards the end of the first, or early in the second, century by which Jews, infidels, and catechumens were excluded from some ecclesiastical ceremonies and from the knowledge of certain mysteries of the Christian religion. Only the faithful were allowed to be present at the Mass, and special secrecy was imposed with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity and the Real Presence. But this discipline was departed from on occasion, as we learn from Justin Martyr's apology to Antonius Pius, where the doctrine of the Real Presence is fully exposed because that doctrine had been greatly misrepresented by the pagans. But that this custom of concealing from all but fully fledged converts the full exposition of Christian doctrine was "confined to a chosen few" and never imparted to the ordinary Christian is false, as a passage—one of many—from Theodoret, which reflects the custom

of the Church in his time, abundantly proves. He writes: "We speak in obscure terms concerning the Divine "mysteries" on account of the uninitiated, but when these have withdrawn, we teach the initiated plainly."<sup>8</sup> That there was not an esoteric doctrine in the Christian Church akin to the "mysteries" of the heathen, is the testimony of history and the belief of all except Theosophists with an axe to grind on the whetstone of credulity.

If we use ordinary scientific canons of judgment, and not "occult" methods, we must decide that Theosophical history is as trashy in its matter as it is habitually vulgar in its literary style. Only the travesties of ancient heresy or modern pseudo-history have imagined an opposition between exoteric and esoteric Christianity.<sup>9</sup>

#### KARMA AND SAMSARA

Both the doctrines of Karma and Samsara are borrowed by neo-Theosophy. The doctrine of Karma (literally, action; as a doctrine it is the inevitable working out of action in new life) is a peculiarly Aryan and Indian belief, according to Professor Keith,<sup>10</sup> and is unknown to the Reg Veda. It is first met with in the Brihadanyaka and Chhandogya Upanishads, in the third period of Sanskrit literature, about 500 B.C. Therein it is said that as a man sows, so shall he reap—in another life. The idea of Karma is that a person's birth, station, character, capabilities, experiences, sorrows, and happiness all form the just recompense for good or bad in earlier existences. Men's deeds, or Karma, are said to be the cause of the existence of evil; and every act, good or bad, begets other acts, good or bad, or Karma, good or bad, and so on *ad infinitum*. As fast as the clock runs down, remarks Deussen, it winds itself up again. Karma is the law of the phenomenal world. Human life, the Hindu believes, will go on forever; and Karma, its moral system, is eternal. The one end of the whole process is self-repetition, not evolution. Thus to the Hindu a man's caste is held to be an infallible index of the state of his soul, caste being the natural outcome of the doctrine of Karma and Transmigration.

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Samsara (Metempsychosis, Transmigration, Reincarnation) is possibly derived from totemistic clans, who believed that after death a man became like his totem—a tiger, an ox, a serpent, etc. Karma and Samsara, woven into the texture of Indian thought, whether Buddhistic or Jainistic, were incorporated in the Darsanas, or Schools of Hindu Philosophy, and to this day have impregnated the Indian mind with the virus of an enervating fatalism. In the domain of morals Karma has been likened to the theory of the conservation of energy in the domain of science. Were Karma true, life would be eternal, as in fact the Hindu believes it is. Unlike Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism, Theosophy confines transmigration of souls to human beings.

Now, Karma is the bait used to attract proselytes to Theosophy. No Christian may accept it. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment."<sup>11</sup> This, too, is the belief of the greater part of the human race. It is not easy to understand why the multitudes in every country and period have not kept the slightest recollection of their former existences; or why, if evolution is continuous, men in each new life have to wait until their mental and physical faculties have reached that stage where their development was arrested by death before continuing their evolution. Indeed, the fact of death itself cannot be accounted for logically on Theosophical principles. Why should death take place at all? On these principles all non-pantheistic religions must be judged to be in error. Although it is alleged they have been founded by Adepts, they have nothing in common with Theosophy.

In *Theosophy and Christianity* (S.P.C.K. 1922) M. Carton Sturge states that "the Theosophic doctrine of Transmigration does not necessarily militate against the central doctrine of Christianity." This no Catholic can accept. That Reincarnation cannot be proved false by *mere reason* is quite another thing. On this subject Cardinal Mercier writes:

... It seems difficult to demonstrate by unaided reason that the end of man's probation will necessarily coincide with the last moment of this life, and this explains why some people imagine that the soul passes through more or less lengthy series of existences, or successive reincarnations in which it is able to become more perfect. . . . All that can be said for this theory of reincarnation is that there is not a single positive argument in its favour.<sup>12</sup>

Instead of being a system of retribution, Karma becomes a system of vicarious punishment of a very extreme type, as Father Ernest Hull, S.J., the veteran Indian missionary, pointed out in controversy with a learned Hindu:

It is repugnant to reason and common sense to transfer the merit and demerit from one life to another, unless the lives have full continuity and unity of consciousness between them, just as it would be to punish a man in delirium for some act done in that state while the continuity and unity of his consciousness was interrupted. For it is essential that the deed and the consciousness should belong to the same conscious being. Therefore, it is unjust of Theosophists to declare that should I be born a cripple, that affliction is a punishment for bad deeds in a previous life of which I am wholly unconscious. A physical consequence it may be of parental carelessness or sin, but I cannot be held morally responsible for that. . . . As an attempt to furnish a satisfactory solution to the problems of life and human destiny, Theosophy is, of all attempts hitherto made by the human mind, a most preposterous, a most perverse, the most demoralizing, and the most unredeemable we have ever met.<sup>13</sup>

The plan to capture Hinduism and Christianity for Theosophy has singularly failed. Neither India, England, nor any other country is one iota the better for the half century of occult investigations of Blavatsky, Besant, Leadbeater and Co., and their chelas at Adyar. To science, literature, and history their voluminous writings have been of no service whatever. The Theosophical Society renders a

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great disservice by filling the heads of its ordinary members with the transcendental, cosmological, and historical rubbish and worthless trash it publishes as Divine Wisdom, and its defense of superstitions which thoughtful Hindus are anxious to get rid of.

In his book on *The Religions and Hidden Cults of India*, Sir George Macmunn remarks that the influence of Theosophy in India "is no doubt due to the countenance it gives to the ethics of Indian idolatry."

Theosophy detaches religion from God. Instead of a Heavenly Father it offers an Unknowable It. Prayer, the Theosophist is told, is useless. To pray to Christ for help is considered moral idleness, "degrading to human dignity," says Mme. Blavatsky. The Gospel stories of our Lord and the Gospels themselves are condemned as unhistorical. Jesus could not suffer for others, for the law of Karma knows no exception. On Mrs. Besant's assertion that "man must be his own savior and redeemer, and can have no other," her friend Stead commented convincingly long ago:

There is no note which vibrates more constantly in the soul of every true man—and the truer he is, the more it vibrates—than the prayer of the Publican: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." That despairing cry rises from the deepest and innermost recesses of our being. It finds an answer in the story of the woman taken in adultery, in the parable of the Prodigal, in the death of the Crucified. To that heartfelt cry, I do not find an answer in Theosophy. I find, on the contrary, an almost exultant assertion of the opposing doctrines, that God is not a Being with a Father's heart; that for sin there is no expiation, and for the sinner, no pardon.<sup>14</sup>

By the soulless law of Karma, Divine mercy is impossible, repentance and prayer are useless. "Karma makes the Universe a machine; Christianity, the manifestation of love."<sup>15</sup>

Esoterical and allegorical explanation of the outward facts of Christianity are marked characteristics of Theosophical writers, and

alleged coincidence of events in the lives of Buddha and Christ <sup>are</sup> written down by them as copying, and therefore proof of the <sup>the</sup> historical nature of the Gospel account.<sup>16</sup> But unlike Theosophists, we have great respect for the mature judgments of oriental scholars, like Max Müller, Rhys Davids, Hopkins, Gough, MacDonald, etc., who have spent a lifetime in the study of the literature and cults of India. A passage or two from Professor Rhys Davids will show that in reality there is neither coincidence nor borrowing from Buddhism by Christianity, but that, on the contrary, later Buddhism is indebted to Christianity:

I cannot believe that the Buddhist traditions had any influence at all over Christian belief. It is much more likely that the later Buddhist writers were influenced by Nestorian and other Christian missionaries. . . . The resemblances between the two accounts are often very striking at first sight, but they are shown by the slightest examination to rest on a basis of belief quite contradictory. Thus the Buddhists did not ascribe to Gotama any divine birth in the Christian sense. . . . When Buddhism arose the Hindus believed in a Great First Cause, in whom and by whom all things exist. . . . The Buddhists established no connection between their Master and this Being. . . . "Buddha came to earth to redeem the world." The *expression* (to redeem the world) cannot be found, as far as I am aware, in any Pali Sutta. . . . And it is only to the Pali Suttas that we can go for any evidence of Buddhist expressions actually used to describe events in Gotama's life. . . . The Chinese and other accounts are all post-Christian. . . . It is in these books (or rather in the English phraseology of our particular translator of them) that the supposed Christian phrases are usually found. . . .<sup>17</sup>

This extract is taken from a correspondence between Cardinal Newman and Professor Rhys Davids (through the intermediary of Mr. W. S. Lilly), which took place in 1882. Newman was "startled" by Lilly in an article in the *Nineteenth Century* "granting so much to Buddhism." The letters which passed between the two foremost

spokesmen for Christianity and Buddhism occupy about thirteen pages of Lilly's *The Claims of Christianity* (1894), and should be carefully studied by any Christian going East of Suez, even on a pleasure trip. In *Early Buddhism* (1907, chap. III) Rhys Davids enlarges, by apt comparison, upon the judgment contained in the last sentence quoted:

If an Eastern scholar desired to ascertain the fact about the life of Christ, he would not have recourse to such works as Klopstock's *Messiah* or Milton's *Paradise Regained*. They do not even purport to be historical. Such value as they have is due to the literary skill with which they recast a story, derived from earlier documents; and, perhaps, also to the part they play as *Tendezens-christen*, as supporting a certain trend of opinion. The historical enquirer would go to the original documents; he would ignore the later poetry. It is, unfortunately, precisely such later books of edifying poetry that have been the source of modern popular notions about the life of Buddha. Sir Edwin Arnold's well known poem, *The Light of Asia*, is an elegant expression in English verse (based upon the *Lalitavistara*) of Buddhist beliefs, at a time when, centuries after the time of Buddha, the Sanskrit poem was composed. Any one who wishes to know the truth, as far as it can be ascertained about the actual events of the Buddha's life, will obviously ignore these productions, however edifying, of literary imaginations. He will go to the earlier documents. The first discovery he will make is that there is no book in the Buddhist Canon exactly corresponding to a Gospel.

In his *Life of Buddha* (1927) Dr. Thomas devotes a chapter to the discussion of alleged parallels between Buddha and Christ, and remarks that in proportion to the investigator's direct knowledge of the Buddhist sources the number seems to decrease. He, like Max Müller, Rhys Davids, L'dé Vale Poussin, rejects all borrowing. "I should be extremely grateful," wrote Max Müller, "if anybody would point out to me the historical channels through which Buddhism had influenced Christianity. I have been looking for such channels all

my life, but hitherto I have found none."<sup>18</sup> Again he writes: "How, if Buddhism had penetrated into Judea and influenced the Rabbis, before the coming of Christ, are we to account for the diametrical opposition of the two religions?" And Professor Atkinson reminds us that Buddhism is absolutely ignored in the literary and archaeological remains of Palestine, Egypt, and Greece.

Pierre Loti concludes an account of an interview he had, in 1903, with the leading lights of Theosophy, at Adyar, in that wonderful library "that stood by the river among strange trees and palms":

A heaven with no Personal God, an immortality without a separate soul, and purification without prayer—such was the formula that rung in my ears in the melancholy silence that followed our conversation.<sup>19</sup>

And it is for such a freak religion, begotten of fraud, fed on fiction and miscalled THEOS-SOPHIA, this *ignis fatuus*, which leads no man knows whither, that Europeans and Americans are invited to barter their heritage of Christian truth.

<sup>1</sup> *The Riddle of Life and How Theosophy Answers It*, pp.1-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Theosophy*, p.14.

<sup>3</sup> *Evolution*, p.15.

<sup>4</sup> *Esoteric Buddhism*, p.207.

<sup>5</sup> *Key to Theosophy*, p.61.

<sup>6</sup> *The Real H. P. Blavatsky*, p.28 (1928).

<sup>7</sup> See *The Christian Creed*; *Text Book of Theosophy*; and *Esoteric Christianity*.

<sup>8</sup> *Quæst*, XV in Num.

<sup>9</sup> C. C. Martindale, *Theosophy*, p.100 (1928).

<sup>10</sup> *J.R.A.S.*, p.569 (1909).

<sup>11</sup> (Heb. 9:27).

<sup>12</sup> *Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 171.

<sup>13</sup> *Theosophy and Christianity* (reprinted from *The Bombay Catholic Examiner*), pp.115, 121, 127.

<sup>14</sup> *Review of Reviews*, Vol. IV, p. 367.

<sup>15</sup> Arendzen, *What becomes of The Dead*, pp.229-39.

<sup>16</sup> G. J. Kingiand, *Esoteric Basis of Christianity*.

<sup>17</sup> *The Claims of Christianity*, pp.34-5. Unfortunately this work is long out of print.

<sup>18</sup> *India, What Can It Teach Us?* Note and foreword

<sup>19</sup> *L'Inde sans les Anglais*. Note F.

## APPENDIX

To understand the following "Confession" the reader should remember that it is one of the letters Madame Blavatsky sent to V. S. Solovyoff, her one-time friend and countryman. This letter was written to Solovyoff, a distinguished man of letters, after Madame discovered that he would not "come in" and be a party to her phenomena. Its object was to prevent Solovyoff from exposing the frauds he had discovered her practicing; it was also a veiled threat of blackmail. The authenticity of this "confession" letter has been vouched for by Madame Blavatsky's sister, Mme. Jelihovsky. See Note 5 on page 24.

## “MY CONFESSION”

“I have made up my mind [doubly underlined]. Has the following picture ever presented itself to your literary imagination? There is living in the forest a wild boar—an ugly creature but doing no harm to any one so long as they leave him in peace in his forest, with his wild beast friends who love him. This boar never hurt any one in his life, but only grunted to himself as he ate the roots which were his own in the forest which sheltered him. There is let loose upon him, without rhyme or reason, a pack of ferocious hounds; men chase him from the wood, threaten to burn his native forest, and to leave him a wanderer, homeless, for any one to kill. He flies for a while, though he is no coward by nature, before these hounds; he tries to escape *for the sake of the forest*, lest they burn it down. But lo! one after another the wild beasts who were once his friends join the hounds; they begin to chase him, yelping and trying to bite and catch him, to make an end of him. Worn out, the boar sees that his forest is already set on fire and that he cannot save it nor himself. What is there for the boar to do? Why, this: he stops, he turns his face to the furious pack of hounds and beasts, and shows himself wholly [twice underlined] as he is, from top to bottom and then falls upon his enemies in his turn, and kills as many of them as his strength serves till he falls dead—and then he is *really* powerless.

“Believe me, *I have fallen because I have made up my mind to fall*, or else to bring about a reaction by telling all God’s truth about myself, *but without mercy on my enemies*. On this I am firmly resolved, and from this day I shall begin to prepare myself in order to be ready.

I will fly no more. Together with this letter, or a few hours later, I shall myself be in Paris, and then on to London. A Frenchman is ready, and a well-known journalist too, delighted to set about the work and to write at my dictation something short, but strong, and what is most important—a true history of my life. *I shall not even attempt to defend*, to justify myself. In this book I shall simply say: In 1848, I, hating my husband, N. V. Blavatsky (it may have been wrong, but still such was the nature God gave me), left him, abandoned him—a *virgin* (I shall produce documents and letters proving this, although he himself is not such a swine as to deny it). I loved one man deeply, but still more I loved occult science, believing in magic, wizards, etc. I wandered with him here and there, in Asia, in America, and in Europe. I met with So-and-so. (You may call him a *wizard*, what does it matter to him?)

"In 1858 I was in London; there came out some story about a child, not mine (there will follow medical evidence, from the faculty of Paris, and it is for this that I am going to Paris). One thing and another was said of me; that I was depraved, possessed with a devil, etc. I shall tell everything as I think fit, everything I did, for the twenty years and more that I laughed at the *qu'en dira-t-on*, and covered up all traces of what I was *really* occupied in i.e., the sciences occultes, for the sake of my family and relations who would at that time have cursed me. I will tell how from my eighteenth year I tried to get people to talk about me, and say about me that this man and that was my lover, and *hundreds* of them. I will tell, too, a great deal of which no one ever dreamed, and *I will prove it*. Then I will inform the world how suddenly my eyes were opened to all the horror of my

*moral suicide*; how I was sent to America to try my psychological capabilities. How I collected a society there, and began to expiate my faults, and attempted to make men better and to sacrifice myself for their regeneration. *I will name all* the theosophists who were brought into the right way, drunkards and rakes, who became almost saints, especially in India, and those who enlisted as theosophists, and continued their former life as though they were doing the work (and there are many of them) and *yet were the first* to join the pack of hounds that were hunting me down, and to bite me. I will describe many Russians, great and small—Madame S—among them, *her* slander and how it turned out to be a lie and a calumny. I shall not spare myself, I swear I will not spare; *I myself will set fire* to the four quarters of my native wood, the society to wit, and I will perish, but I will perish *with a huge following*. God grant I shall die, shall perish at once on publication; but if not, if the master would not allow it, how should I fear anything? Am I a criminal before the law? Have I killed any one, destroyed, defamed? I am an American foreigner, and I must not go back to Russia. From Blavatsky, if he is alive, what have I to fear? It is thirty-eight years since I parted from him, after that I passed three days and a half with him in Tiflis in 1863, and then we parted again. Or M—? I do not care a straw about that egoist and hypocrite! He betrayed me, destroyed me by telling *lies* to the medium Home, who has been disgracing me for ten years already, so much the worse for him. You understand it is for the sake of the society I have valued my reputation these ten years. I *trembled* lest rumours, founded *on my own efforts* (a splendid case for the *psychologist*, for Richet and Co.) and magnified a hundred

times, might throw discredit on the society while blackening me. I was ready to go on my knees to those who helped me to cast a veil over my past; to give my life and all my powers to those who helped me. But now? Will you, or Home the medium, or M—, or any one in the world, frighten me with threats when I have myself resolved on a full confession? Absurd! I tortured and killed myself with fear and terror that I should damage the society—kill it. But now I torture myself no more. I have thought it all out, coolly and sanely, I have risked all on a single card—*all* [twice underlined]; I will snatch the weapon from my enemies' hands and write a book which will make a noise through all Europe and Asia, and bring in immense sums of money, to support my orphan niece, an innocent child, my brother's orphan. Even if all the filth, all the scandal and lies against me had been the holy truth, still I should have been no worse than hundreds of princesses, countesses, court ladies and royalties, than Queen Isabella herself, who have given themselves, even *sold* themselves to the entire male sex, from nobles to coachmen and waiters inclusive; what can they say of me worse than that? *And all this I myself will say and sign.*

“No! The devils will save me in this last great hour. You did not calculate on the cool determination of *despair*, which *was* and has *passed over*. To you I have never done any harm whatever, I never dreamt of it. If I am lost I am lost with every one. I will even take to lies, to the greatest of lies, which for that reason is the most likely of all to be believed. I will say and publish it in the *Times* and in all the papers, that the ‘master’ and ‘Mahatma K. H.’ are only the product of my own imagination: that I *invented* them, that the phenomena were

all more or less *spiritualistic* apparitions, and I shall have twenty million *spiritists* in a body at my back. I will say that in certain instances I fooled people; I will expose dozens of fools [underlined twice], *des hallucines*; I will say that I was making trial for my own satisfaction, for the sake of experiment. And to this I have been brought by *you* [underlined twice]. You have been the last straw which has broken the camel's back under its intolerably heavy burden.

"Now you are at liberty to conceal nothing. Repeat to all Paris what you have ever heard or know about me. I have already written a letter to Sinnett *forbidding* him to publish my *memoirs* at his own discretion. I myself will publish them with all the truth. So there will be the '*truth* [underlined twice] about H. P. Blavatsky,' in which psychology and *her own* and *others'* immorality and Rome and politics and all *her own* and *others'* filth once more will be set out to God's world. I shall conceal nothing. It will be a *Saturnalia* of the moral depravity of mankind, this *confession* of mine, a worthy epilogue of my stormy life. And it will be a treasure for science as well as for scandal; and it is all me, *me* [underlined twice]; I will show myself with a *reality* [underlined twice], which will break many, and will resound through all the world. Let the *psychist* gentlemen, and whosoever will, set on foot a new inquiry. Mohini and all the rest, even *India* are dead for me. I thirst for one thing only, that the world may know all the *reality*, all the *truth*, and learn the lesson. And then *death*, kindest of all.

H. BLAVATSKY.

"You may print this letter if you will, even in Russia. It is all the same now."<sup>1</sup>

Of this "Confession" Dr. Walter Leaf, the translator of Solovyoff's works remarks: "The authenticity of the letters has in no case been impugned, and in the case of the "Confession" has been explicitly admitted by Madame Jelihovsky herself."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A Modern Priestess of Isis pp. 176-181.

<sup>2</sup>M.P.I. ix. The reference is to the letters printed in M.P.I. Mme. Jelihovsky, the sister of Mme. Blavatsky.

## II

### WHAT THEOSOPHY IS

Just how far the human mind can wander from sane logic, once it has rejected common-sense principles about truth and its attainment, is best illustrated by the religion of the *Theosophists*. There has been in recent times a revival of this cult. Theosophical lectures are frequently advertised in large cities; theosophical books appear now and then that create quite a stir; and various theosophical "schools" claim large numbers of followers.

The fundamental principle of theosophy is the notion that its adherents have a special power—not that of reason or experience or any of the other means of human knowledge—but a special power by which they simply know the secret forces of nature, the great central power of the

universe, and mysterious things about man. There is no proof of this power given; no evidence possible for the truth of the knowledge it brings them, because it is knowledge of secret, hidden, mysterious things that ordinary men cannot know. They simply state that they have that power; other men are to believe them.

By means of this so-called power, the theosophists claim to know that every individual is merely a Divine Spark passing through one incarnation after another. In other words, I who live today am not living for the first time; this may be my hundredth or my thousandth reincarnation; before this one, I may have been a horse and a dog and a beetle and an elephant and a crippled child, etc. I am a Divine Spark wending my way through these various reincarnations or bodily existences towards perfect unity with the absolute. That is the goal of all life: there is no heaven or hell; there is only final unity with the absolute in which personality is lost, but not individuality. (Do not feel grieved if you can't make sense out of that; that's the theosophists' secret: saying things that do not make sense.)

A favorite word of the theosophists is *karma*. Karma, they say, is what you started and did not finish in a previous existence, and therefore it is the thing that causes you to be what you are in this existence: or, as they put it, your karma is the effect of what you did or did not do in your previous existence, which determines what you are now. If you are crippled now, that is because of something bad you did as a horse or some other creature.

These few statements of the theosophists are sufficient to show its absurdity. It presents no grounds for its claims to secret and mysterious knowledge; and that knowledge itself is full of fantastic follies for which there is not the slightest shred of evidence. . . . But men who have abandoned all sound religion and philosophical truth seem not to mind its absurdity.

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